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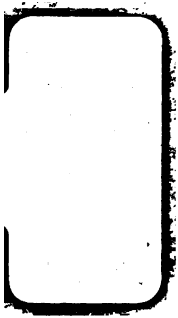

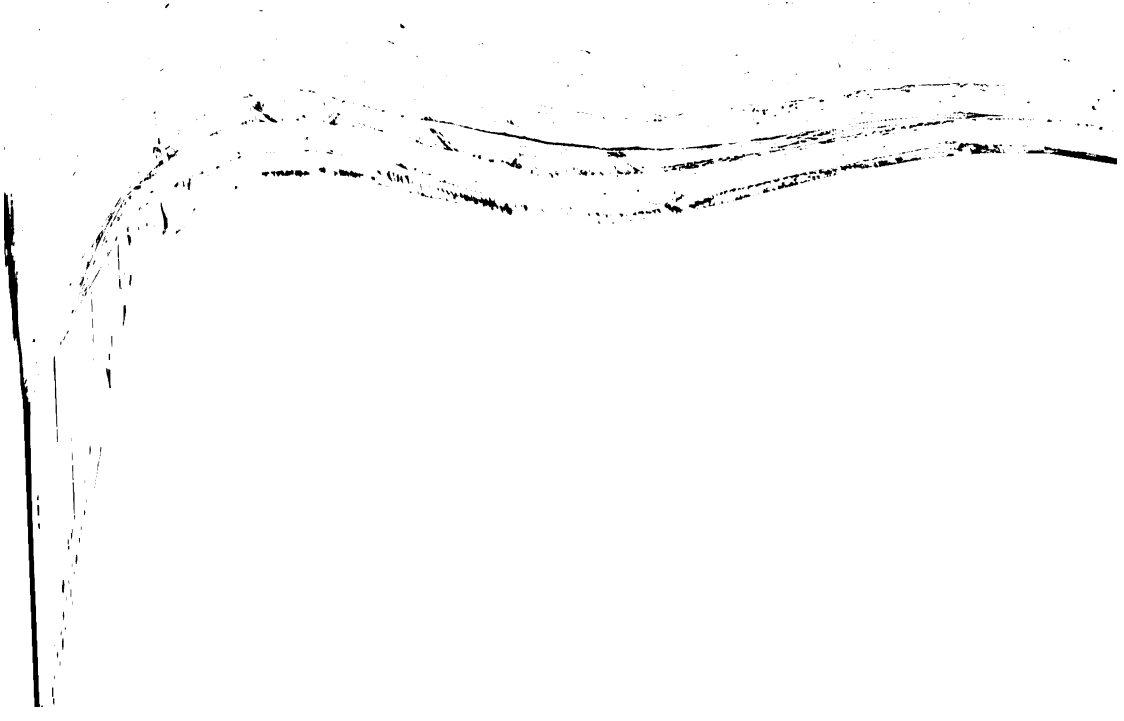

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BRINGING IN THE YULE LOG

The Best Poems on Christmas

COMPILED BY

EDWARD A. BRYANT

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controll'd me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.
—TENNYSON, *In Memoriam.*

NEW YORK
THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY
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Preface

THE festivities in celebration of the Yule-tide season began in old England with the lighting of the Yule log or "clog" on Christmas Eve, according to Irving's account in *The Sketch-Book:* "The grate was removed from the wide, overwhelming fireplace, to make way for a fire of wood, in the midst of which was an enormous log glowing and blazing, and sending forth a vast volume of light and heat: this I understood was the Yule clog, which the Squire was particular in having brought in and illumined on Christmas Eve, according to ancient custom." This huge log, frequently the whole stump of a tree, was lighted by means of a small portion of the previous year's log, preserved for the purpose. At the same time with the firing of the log the Yule-tide candles were lighted.

Beginning with verses anticipatory of the delights of the Christmas season, the compiler

of this book of Yule-tide poems had intended to give emphasis to the sprightlier side in the choice of selections,—to those carols and other Christmas lyrics which, like Mr. Wardle's song, would naturally be sung around the hearth in the glow of the burning log. While this idea has to a certain extent prevailed, it has proved to be the fact that underlying the revelries of Christmas Eve and the merrymaking of Christmas Day, there is constantly in the minds of us all, and especially of our poets, the thought of the sacred origin of the festival. The greater part of the poetry of permanent value, suitable for inclusion here, is that which celebrates in hymns and carols the Nativity and all it signified, from the earliest Anglo-Norman Carol, down through Milton's noble Ode, to the hymns of Watts, Heber, and Phillips Brooks and the carols of William Morris and Christina Rossetti. So while the collection opens with verse hailing the more worldly signs of the season and the delights of the table and the dance,—with here and there a soberer thought,—a larger space later in the book is occupied by the sacred song in honor of the Holy Birth and by the carols. It is believed that the proportion of secular to sacred verse will not be found inappropriate.

The great body of Christmas verse calculated

to endure is open for free use in a work of this description. Among the poems which it was felt would add to the worth of the book but which are controlled by copyright are the two choice examples of Father Tabb's genius, to be found on pages 126 and 142, for permission to incorporate which acknowledgment is gratefully made to Small, Maynard & Company. The publishers of *Collier's Weekly* have been equally generous in granting the use of poems by Bliss Carman, M. V. Caruthers, and John Kendrick Bangs. Messrs. E. P. Dutton & Co. have courteously extended permission to include the four poems by Phillips Brooks, without which no Christmas anthology would be complete. The fine poem by Eugene Field, entitled "Christmas Treasures," is inserted by arrangement with Charles Scribner's Sons, authorized publishers of Field's works, and the selection from Thomas Bailey Aldrich, entitled "Kriss Kringle," by arrangement with the Houghton Mifflin Company, authorized publishers of Aldrich's works. To the authors who have kindly allowed extracts from their works to be reprinted here and have extended good wishes, sincere gratitude is expressed for their courtesy.

E. A. B.

Contents

YULE-TIDE ANTICIPATIONS

		PAGE
The Coming of Christmas	*Lady Lindsay*	3
Signs of the Season	*Old English Ballad*	4
The Delights of Christmas	*Anonymous*	5
Old Christmas	*George Wither*	7
Christmas Time	*John Clare*	11
Winter	*R. Southey*	14
December	*C. G. Rossetti*	15
A Winter Song	*W. C. Bennett*	16
The Light of Christmas	*Norval Clyne*	16
Christmas comes but Once a Year	*Thomas Miller*	18
The Bells of Yule	*A. Tennyson*	22
Come Home, My Sailor	*W. C. Bennett*	25
Alone—with one fair Star	*Mathilde Blind*	26
The Farmer's Invitation	*William Barnes*	27

THE YULE LOG

Ceremonies to the Maids	*R. Herrick*	30
Make me Merry	*Balliol MS.*	31
Come, bring with a Noise	*R. Herrick*	32
A Yule-tide Song	*Anonymous*	33
The Holly Berry	*Thomas Miller*	33
Get Ivy and Holly	*Thomas Tusser*	33
The Christmas Pie	*R. Herrick*	34
A Word of Advice	*Anonymous*	34

		PAGE
For the Proud-hearted	*Poor Robin*	35
The True Christmas	*H. Vaughan*	35
Old Christmas-tide	*Sir W. Scott*	36
Within and Without	*J. R. Lowell*	40
Holly Song	*Shakespeare*	41
At the Sign of the Jolly Jack	*Geoffrey Smith*	42
The Mahogany Tree	*W. M. Thackeray*	44
Wassailer's Song	*R. Southwell*	46
Wassail! Wassail!	*Ainsworth's Magazine*	48
Mr. Wardle's Carol	*C. Dickens*	49

SANTA CLAUS AND OTHER SAINTS

Santa Claus	*Anonymous*	53
A Song of Saint Francis	*H. N. Maugham*	54
A Visit from St. Nicholas	*C. C. Moore*	55
Saint Nicholas—His Roundelay	*R. L. Munger*	57
Kriss Kringle	*T. B. Aldrich*	59
Saint Brandan	*M. Arnold*	60
Good King Wenceslas	*J. M. Neale*	63
King Witlaf's Drinking-horn	*H. W. Longfellow*	65
A Saint in Disguise	*W. G. Collingwood*	67
St. Bride	*Fiona Macleod*	68
Two Christmas Saints	*M. V. Caruthers*	70

CHRISTMAS DAY

Christmas	*Lady Lindsay*	73
A Christmas Greeting	*Anonymous*	73
Merry Christmas	*Mary C. Low*	74
Christmas Day	*J. K. Bangs*	74
The Christmas Box	*Anonymous*	75
The Holly and the Ivy	*Old English*	76
Ring the Bells	*Lady Lindsay*	77

Contents

		PAGE
Merry Christmas, Every One!	*Anonymous*	78
For the Wanderer	*Edwin Waugh*	80
The Promise of Christmas Day	*Lady Lindsay*	80
A Christmas Day Prayer	*Robert Bridges*	83
Peace on Earth	*H. W. Longfellow*	84
A Meditation for Christmas Day	*Selwyn Image*	86
The Christmas Service	*Anonymous*	87
A Christmas Chime	*Kathleen Kavanagh*	88
Psalm for Christmas Day	*Thomas Pestel*	89
Christmas Once is Christmas Still	*Phillips Brooks*	90
A Christmas Sermon	*R. Browning*	93
The Mystic's Christmas	*J. G. Whittier*	95
A Christmas Antiphone	*A. C. Swinburne*	97
Bryngynge in the Bore's Head	*Old English*	101
Christmas Evergreens	*Barry Cornwall*	102
The Mistletoe	*J. Ashby Sterry*	103
Under the Holly Bough	*Charles Mackay*	104
The Holly	*Eliza Cook*	105
Mistletoe and Holly	*Alice R. Taggart*	106
A Lullaby for Christmas	*J. A. Symonds*	107
Christmas Treasures	*Eugene Field*	108
Christmas at the Cape	*John Runcie*	110
Christmas in India	*Rudyard Kipling*	111
Christmas at Sea	*R. L. Stevenson*	114
Christmas Night of '62	*W. G. McCabe*	118
Christmas Day—1868	*C. Kingsley*	120

CHRISTMAS IN SACRED SONG

Out of Bounds	*John B. Tabb*	126
In Excelsis Gloria	*Harleian MS.*	127
In Bethlehem, that Noble Place	*A. D. 1550*	128
The Nativity	*Ben Jonson*	129

		PAGE
Sonnet on the Nativity . . .	*John Donne*	130
Out of the Shadow	*Michael Fairless* . .	131
Cradle Hymn	*Martin Luther* . . .	132
The Shepherds	*William Drummond* .	132
Ode to the Birth of Our Saviour	*Robert Herrick* . . .	133
Christmas Day	*Reginald Heber* . . .	135
While Shepherds Watched . .	*Nahum Tate* . . .	136
Cradled 'mid the Oxen	*Henry Knight* . . .	137
Gloria in Excelsis	*Lady Lindsay* . . .	138
Shepherds, Rejoice	*Isaac Watts*	139
O Little Town of Bethlehem . .	*Phillips Brooks* . . .	141
The Light of Bethlehem . . .	*John B. Tabb* . . .	142
This Happy Day	*Phœbe Cary*	143
The Voice of the Christ-child .	*Phillips Brooks* . .	143
Immortal Babe, Who this Dear Day	*Bishop Hall* . . .	144
A Rocking Hymn	*George Wither* . . .	145
Children's Christmas Eve . .	*John Keble*	147
Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity	*John Milton* . . .	150
The Glorious Song	*E. H. Sears*	162
Hymn of Gladness	*Thomas Mair* . . .	163
Hark! the Herald Angels . . .	*Charles Wesley* . . .	165
Christians, Awake!	*John Byron*	166
Happy Night and Happy Silence	*E. Thring*	168
The Birth at Bethlehem . . .	*T. Campbell*	170
Hark, the Glad Sound! . . .	*P. Doddridge* . . .	171
Cradle Song	*Isaac Watts*	172
The Star of Bethlehem	*H. K. White*	174
The Burning Babe	*R. Southwell* . . .	175
Calm on the Listening Ear of Night	*E. H. Sears*	176

Contents

		PAGE
The Calm and Silent Night	*A. Domett*	178
Carol, Carol, Tenderly	*Lady Lindsay*	180
Happy Shepherds	" "	181
Christ's Nativity	*H. Vaughan*	182
Who can Forget?	*G. Fletcher*	184
The Angel's Story	*A. A. Procter*	186
They leave the Land of Gems	*A. de Vere*	187
New Prince, New Pomp	*R. Southwell*	188
The Shepherds had an Angel	*C. G. Rossetti*	189
At Christmas	*A. S. Cripps*	191
Holy Christmas	*G. Herbert*	193

CHRISTMAS CAROLS

First Christmas Carol	*St. Luke*	196
Anglo-Norman Carol	*Thirteenth Century*	197
The First Noel	*Old English*	199
A Fifteenth-Century Carol	*Anonymous*	200
God rest you Merry, Gentlemen	"	201
A Christmas Carol	*R. Herrick*	204
This Endris Night	*Old Carol*	206
I saw Three Ships	*Anonymous*	209
The Golden Carol	*Old English*	211
The Cherry-tree Carol	" "	212
A Virgin most Pure	*Old Carol*	213
To-day in Bethlehem	*John of Damascus*	215
Christmas Carol for Children	*Martin Luther*	216
Masters, in this Hall	*W. Morris*	217
From Far Away	" "	220
O'er the World, in Silence Sleeping	*G. C. Thomas*	222
O Lovely Voices of the Sky	*Felicia Hemans*	224
The Moon that now is Shining	*A. A. Procter*	225

Contents

		PAGE
When the Herds were Watching	*W. Canton*	227
Sleep, Holy Babe	*E. Caswall*	228
I hear along Our Street	*H. W. Longfellow*	228
In the Bleak Midwinter	*C. G. Rossetti*	230
A Hope Carol	" " "	232
Christmas Carols Everywhere	*C. Kingsley*	233
The Christmas Carol	*W. Wordsworth*	235
Everywhere, Christmas To-night	*Phillips Brooks*	238
Lo! New-born Jesus	*C. G. Rossetti*	240
What means this Glory?	*J. R. Lowell*	241

Yule-tide Anticipations

Chill December brings the sleet
Blazing fire and Christmas treat.

The Months.

Here comes old Father Christmas,
With sound of fife and drums;
With mistletoe about his brow,
So merrily he comes!

Rose Terry Cooke.

Yule-tide Anticipations

THE COMING OF CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS is a-drawing near,
Christmas-tide and Christmas cheer,
Merry wassail, merry song,
Joyous dance and roundelay —
All that doth to Yule belong.
Yet unto my soul I say,
"Thou that slumberest, wake and pray."

Christmas is a-nearing quite,
Time of feast and full delight,
Pleasant pomp and allegresse,
Harp and viol's music gay,
Jewelled tokens, gaudy dress.
Yet unto my soul I say,
"Thou that slumberest, wake and pray."

Christmas — Sheahan — Fifteen
Christmas is a-chiming soon,
Bringing Love for choicest boon,
Pensioners to sit in hall,

Comrades, friends of many a day,
Greeting fair from great and small.
Yet unto my soul I say,
"Thou that slumberest, wake and pray."

Lady Lindsay.

SIGNS OF THE SEASON

THE cooks shall be busied, by day and by night,
In roasting and boiling, for taste and delight,
Their senses in liquor that 's happy they 'll steep,
Though they be afforded to have little sleep;
They still are employed for to dress us, in brief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and roast beef.

Although the cold weather doth hunger provoke,
'T is a comfort to see how the chimneys do smoke;
Provision is making for beer, ale, and wine,
For all that are willing or ready to dine:
Then haste to the kitchen for diet the chief,
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and roast beef.

All travellers, as they do pass on their way,
At gentlemen's halls are invited to stay,

Themselves to refresh and their horses to rest,
Since that he must be old Christmas's guest;
Nay, the poor shall not want, but have for relief
Plum-pudding, goose, capon, minc'd-pies, and
roast beef.

Old English Ballad.

THE DELIGHTS OF CHRISTMAS

WHEN Christmas approaches, each bosom is gay,
That festival banishes sorrow away;
While Richard he kisses both Susan and Dolly,
When tricking the house up with ivy and holly;
For never as yet it was counted a crime
To be merry and cherry at that happy time.

Then comes turkey and chine, with the famous
roast beef,
Of English provisions still reckoned the chief;
Roger wishes the cook-maid his wishes to crown,
"Oh, Dolly! pray give me a bit of the brown;"
For never as yet it was counted a crime
To be merry and cherry at that happy time.

The luscious plum pudding does smoking appear,
And the charming mince pie is not far in the rear;

Then each licks his chops to behold such a sight,
For to taste it affords him superior delight;
For never as yet it was counted a crime
To be merry and cherry at that happy time.

Now the humming October goes merrily round,
And each with good humor is happily crown'd,
The song and the dance, and the mirth-giving jest,
Alike without harm by each one is expressed,
For never as yet it was counted a crime
To be merry and cherry at that happy time.

Twelfth Day next approaches, to give you delight,
And the sugar'd rich cake is display'd to the sight;
Then sloven and slut, and the King and the Queen,
Alike must be present to add to the scene;
For never as yet it was counted a crime
To be merry and cherry at that happy time.

May each be found thus as the year circles round,
With mirth and good humor each Christmas be crown'd,
And may all who have plenty of riches in store
With their bountiful blessings make happy the poor;
For never as yet it was counted a crime
To be merry and cherry at that happy time.

Anonymous.

OLD CHRISTMAS

LO now is come our joyful'st feast;
Let every man be jolly.
Each room with ivy leaves is dress'd,
And every post with holly.
Though some churls at our mirth repine,
Round your foreheads garlands twine,
Drown sorrow in a cup of wine,
And let us all be merry.

Now all our neighbors' chimneys smoke,
And Christmas blocks are burning;
Their ovens they with baked meats choke,
And all their spits are turning.
Without the door let sorrow lie,
And if for cold it hap to die,
We 'll bury it in a Christmas pie,
And evermore be merry.

Now every lad is wondrous trim,
And no man minds his labor;
Our lasses have provided them
A bagpipe and a tabor.
Young men and maids, and girls and boys,
Give life to one another's joys,
And you anon shall by their noise
Perceive that they are merry.

Rank misers now do sparing shun,
  Their hall of music soundeth,
And dogs thence with whole shoulders run,
  So all things there aboundeth.
The country folks themselves advance,
With crowdy-muttons come out of France;
And Jack shall pipe, and Jill shall dance,
    And all the town be merry.

Ned Swash has fetch'd his bands from pawn,
  And all his best apparel;
Brisk Nell hath bought a ruff of lawn,
  With droppings of the barrel;
And those that hardly all the year
Had bread to eat or rags to wear
Will have both clothes and dainty fare,
    And all the day be merry.

Now poor men to the justices
  With capons make their arrants,
And if they hap to fail of these,
  They plague them with their warrants.
But now they feed them with good cheer,
And what they want they take in beer,
For Christmas comes but once a year,
    And then they shall be merry.

Good farmers in the country nurse
The poor, that else were undone.
Some landlords spend their money worse,
On lust and pride in London.
There the roysters they do play,
Drab and dice their lands away,
Which may be ours another day,
And therefore let 's be merry.

The client now his suit forbears,
The prisoner's heart is eased,
The debtor drinks away his cares,
And for the time is pleased.
Though others' purses be more fat,
Why should we pine or grieve at that?
Hang sorrow, care will kill a cat,
And therefore let 's be merry.

Hark, now the wags abroad do call
Each other forth to rambling;
Anon you 'll see them in the hall
For nuts and apples scrambling.
Hark, how the roofs with laughter sound!
Anon they 'll think the house goes round,
For they the cellar's depth have found,
And there they will be merry.

The wenches with their wassail bowls
About the streets are singing;
The boys are come to catch the owls,
The wild mare in is bringing.
Our kitchen-boy hath broke his box,
And to the dealing of the ox
Our honest neighbors come by flocks,
And here they will be merry.

Now kings and queens poor sheepcotes have,
And mate with everybody;
The honest now may play the knave,
And wise men play at noddy.
Some youths will now a-mumming go,
Some others play at rowland-hoe,
And twenty other gameboys, moe,
Because they will be merry.

Then, wherefore, in these merry days
Should we, I pray, be duller?
No; let us sing some roundelays
To make our mirth the fuller.
And, whilst inspirèd thus we sing,
Let all the streets with echoes ring;
Woods and hills, and everything,
Bear witness we are merry.

George Wither.

CHRISTMAS TIME

GLAD Christmas comes, and every hearth
Makes room to give him welcome now,
E'en want will dry its tears in mirth,
And crown him with a holly bough;
Though tramping 'neath a winter sky,
O'er snowy paths and rimy stiles,
The housewife sets her spinning by,
To bid him welcome with her smiles.

Each house is swept the day before,
And windows stuck with evergreens,
The snow is besomed from the door,
And comfort crowns the cottage scenes.
Gilt holly with its thorny pricks,
And yew, and box, with berries small,
These deck the unused candlesticks,
And pictures hanging by the wall.

Neighbors resume their annual cheer,
Wishing, with smiles and spirits high,
Glad Christmas and a happy year,
To every morning passer-by;
Milkmaids their Christmas journeys go,
Accompanied by a favored swain;

And children pace the crumping snow,
  To taste their granny's cake again.

. . . . . .

The singing waits—a merry throng,
  At early morn, with simple skill,
Yet imitate the angel's song,
  And chant their Christmas ditty still;
And, 'mid the storm that dies and swells
  By fits, in hummings softly steals
The music of the village bells,
  Ringing around their merry peals.

And oft for pence and spicy ale,
  With winter nosegays pinned before,
The wassail-singer tells her tale,
  And drawls her Christmas carols o'er.
While 'prentice boy, with ruddy face,
  And rim-bepowdered dancing locks,
From door to door, with happy face,
  Runs round to claim his Christmas-box.

. . . . . .

The block upon the fire is put,
  To sanction custom's old desires,
And many a fagot's bands are cut
  For the old farmer's Christmas fires;
Where loud-tongued gladness joins the throng,
  And Winter meets the warmth of May,

Till, feeling soon the heat too strong,
He rubs his shins and draws away.

While snows the window-panes bedim,
The fire curls up a sunny charm,
Where, creaming o'er the pitcher's rim,
The flowering ale is set to warm.
Mirth full of joy as summer bees
Sits there its pleasure to impart,
And children, 'tween their parents' knees,
Sing scraps of carols off by heart.

. . . . . .

Thou day of happy sound and mirth,
That long with childish memory stays,
How blest around the cottage hearth,
I met thee in my younger days,
Harping, with rapture's dreaming joys,
On presents which thy coming found,
The welcome sight of little toys,
The Christmas gift of cousins round.

. . . . . .

About the glowing hearth at night,
The harmless laugh and winter tale
Go round; while parting friends delight
To toast each other o'er their ale.
The cotter oft with quiet zeal
Will, musing, o'er his Bible lean;

While in the dark the lovers steal,
To kiss and toy behind the screen.

Old customs! Oh! I love the sound,
However simple they may be;
Whate'er with time hath sanction found,
Is welcome and is dear to me,
Pride grows above simplicity,
And spurns them from her haughty mind;
And soon the poet's song will be
The only refuge they can find.

John Clare.

WINTER

A WRINKLED, crabbed man they picture thee,
Old Winter, with a rugged beard as gray
As the long moss upon the apple-tree;
Blue-lipt, an ice-drop at thy sharp blue nose,
Close muffled up, and on thy dreary way,
Plodding alone through sleet and drifting snows.
They should have drawn thee by the high-heapt hearth,
Old Winter! seated in thy great armed chair,
Watching the children at their Christmas mirth,
Or circled by them, as thy lips declare

Some merry jest, or tale of murder dire,
  Or troubled spirit that disturbs the night,
Pausing at times to rouse the mouldering fire,
  Or tasté the old October brown and bright.

Robert Southey.

DECEMBER

From "The Months"

NAY, no closed doors for me,
  But open doors and open hearts and glee
  To welcome young and old.

Dimmest and brightest month am I;
  My short days end, my lengthening days begin;
What matters more or less sun in the sky
  When all is sun within?

[*December begins making a wreath as he sings.*]

Ivy and privet, dark as night,
  I weave with hips and haws a cheerful show,
And holly for a beauty and delight,
  And milky mistletoe.

While high above them all I set
  Yew twigs and Christmas roses pure and pale;
Then Spring her snowdrop and her violet
  May keep, so sweet and frail;

May keep each merry singing bird,
Of all her happy birds that singing build:
For I 've a carol which some shepherds heard
Once in a wintry field.

Christina G. Rossetti.

A WINTER SONG

CRACKLE and blaze,
Crackle and blaze;
There 's ice on the ponds, there are leaves on the ways;
But the barer each tree
The more reason have we
To joy in the summer that roars in thy blaze.

William Cox Bennett.

THE LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS

THE blasts of chill December sound
The farewell of the year,
And night's swift shadows gath'ring round
O'ercloud the soul with fear;
But rest you well, good Christian men,
Nor be of heart forlorn;
December's darkness brings again
The Light of Christmas morn.

The welcome snow at Christmas-tide
Falls shining from the skies:
On village paths and uplands wide
All holy-white it lies;
It crowns with pearl the oaks and pines,
And glitters on the thorn,
And purer is the Light that shines
On gladsome Christmas morn.

'T was when the world was waxing old,
And night on Bethlehem lay,
The shepherds saw the heavens unfold
A light beyond the day;
Such glory ne'er had visited
A world with sin outworn;
But yet more glorious Light is shed
On happy Christmas morn.

Those shepherds poor, how blest were they
The angels' song to hear!
In manger cradle as He lay,
To greet their Lord so dear!
The Lord of Heaven's eternal height
For us a Child was born:
And He, the very Light of Light,
Shone forth that Christmas morn!

Before His Infant smile afar
Were driven the hosts of hell;

And still in souls that childlike are
  His guardian Love shall dwell:
O then rejoice, good Christian men,
  Nor be of heart forlorn;
December's darkness brings again
  The Light of Christmas morn.

Norval Clyne.

CHRISTMAS COMES BUT ONCE A YEAR

THOSE Christmas bells as sweetly chime,
  As on the day when first they rung
So merrily in the olden time,
  And far and wide their music flung:
Shaking the tall gray ivied tower,
With all their deep melodious power:
  They still proclaim to every ear,
  Old Christmas comes but once a year.

Then he came singing through the woods,
  And plucked the holly bright and green;
Pulled here and there the ivy's buds;
  Was sometimes hidden, sometimes seen —
Half-buried 'neath the mistletoe,
His long beard hung with flakes of snow;
  And still he ever carolled clear,
  Old Christmas comes but once a year.

He merrily came in days of old,
When roads were few, and ways were foul,
Now staggered, — now some ditty trolled,
Now drank deep from his wassail bowl;
His holly silvered o'er with frost.
Nor ever once his way he lost,
For reeling here and reeling there,
Old Christmas came but once a year.

The hall was then with holly crowned,
'T was on the wild-deer's antlers placed;
It hemmed the battered armor round,
And every ancient trophy graced.
It decked the boar's head, tusked and grim,
The wassail bowl wreathed to the brim,
And summer-green hung everywhere,
For Christmas came but once a year.

. . . . . .

The maiden then, in quaint attire,
Loosed from her head the silken hood,
And danced before the yule-log fire —
The crackling monarch of the wood.
Helmet and shield flashed back the blaze,
In lines of light, like summer rays,
While music sounded loud and clear;
For Christmas came but once a year.

What, though upon his hoary head,
Have fallen many a winter's snow,
His wreath is still as green and red
As 't was a thousand years ago.
For what has he to do with care?
His wassail bowl and old arm-chair
Are ever standing ready there,
For Christmas comes but once a year.

No marvel Christmas lives so long,
He never knew but merry hours,
His nights were spent with mirth and song,
In happy homes, and princely bowers;
Was greeted both by serf and lord,
And seated at the festal-board;
While every voice cried: "Welcome here,"
Old Christmas comes but once a year.

But what care we for days of old,
The knights whose arms have turned to rust,
Their grim boar's heads, and pasties cold,
Their castles crumbled into dust?
Never did sweeter faces go,
Blushing beneath the mistletoe,
Than are to-night assembled here,
For Christmas still comes once a year.

For those old times are dead and gone,
And those who hailed them passed away,
Yet still there lingers many a one,
To welcome in old Christmas Day.
The poor will many a care forget,
The debtor think not of his debt;
But, as they each enjoy their cheer,
Wish it was Christmas all the year.

And still around these good old times
We hang like friends full loth to part,
We listen to the simple rhymes
Which somehow sink into the heart,
"Half musical, half melancholy,"
Like childish smiles that still are holy,
A masquer's face dimmed with a tear,
For Christmas comes but once a year.

. . . . . .

At early day the youthful voice,
Heard singing on from door to door,
Makes the responding heart rejoice,
To know the children of the poor
For once are happy all day long;
We smile and listen to the song,
The burthen still remote or near,
"Old Christmas comes but once a year."

Upon a gayer, happier scene,
  Never did holly berries peer,
Or ivy throw its trailing green,
  On brighter forms than there are here,
Nor Christmas in his old arm-chair
Smile upon lips and brows more fair,
  Then let us sing amid our cheer,
  "Old Christmas still comes once a year."

Thomas Miller.

THE BELLS OF YULE

From "In Memoriam"

THE time draws near the birth of Christ:
  The moon is hid; the night is still;
The Christmas bells from hill to hill
Answer each other in the mist.

Four voices of four hamlets round,
From far and near, on mead and moor,
  Swell out and fail, as if a door
Were shut between me and the sound:

Each voice four changes on the wind,
  That now dilate and now decrease,
  Peace and good-will, good-will and peace,
Peace and good-will to all mankind.

Yule-tide Anticipations

This year I slept and woke with pain,
I almost wish'd no more to wake,
And that my hold on life would break
Before I heard those bells again:

But they my troubled spirit rule,
For they controll'd me when a boy;
They bring me sorrow touch'd with joy,
The merry, merry bells of Yule.

With such compelling cause to grieve
As daily vexes household peace,
And chains regret to his decease,
How dare we keep our Christmas eve;

Which brings no more a welcome guest
To enrich the threshold of the night
With shower'd largess of delight
In dance and song and game and jest?

Yet go, and while the holly boughs
Entwine the cold baptismal font,
Make one wreath more for Use and Womb,
That guard the portals of the house;

Old sisters of a day gone by,
Gray nurses, loving nothing new;
Why should they miss their yearly due
Before their time? They, too, will die.

With trembling fingers did we weave
  The holly round the Christmas hearth;
  A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
And sadly fell our Christmas eve.

At our old pastimes in the hall
  We gamboll'd, making vain pretence
  Of gladness, with an awful sense
Of one mute Shadow watching all.

We paused: the winds were in the beech:
  We heard them sweep the winter land;
  And in a circle hand in hand
Sat silent, looking each at each.

Then echo-like our voices rang;
  We sang, though every eye was dim,
  A merry song we sang with him
Last year: impetuously we sang:

We ceased; a gentler feeling crept
  Upon us: surely rest is meet:
  "They rest," we said, "their sleep is sweet,"
And silence followed, and we wept.

Our voices took a higher range;
  Once more we sang: "They do not die
  Nor lose their mortal sympathy,
Nor change to us, altho' they change;

"Rapt from the fickle and the frail
With gathered power, yet the same,
Pierces the keen seraphic flame
From orb to orb, from veil to veil."

Rise, happy morn; rise, holy morn;
Draw forth the cheerful day from night:
O Father, touch the east, and light
The light that shone when Hope was born.

Alfred Tennyson.

COME HOME, MY SAILOR

BLOW, wind, blow;
Sing through yard and shroud;
Pipe it shrilly and loud,
Aloft as well as below;
Sing in my sailor's ear
The song I sing to you,
"Come home, my sailor true,
For Christmas that comes so near."

Go, wind, go;
Hurry his home-bound sail,
Through gusts that are edged with hail,
Through winter, and sleet, and snow;

Song, in my sailor's ear,
Your shrilling and moan shall be,
For he knows they sing him to me
And Christmas that comes so near.

William Cox Bennett.

ALONE — WITH ONE FAIR STAR

ALONE — with one fair star for company,
The loveliest star among the hosts of night,
While the gray tide ebbs with the ebbing light —
I pace along the darkening wintry sea.
Now round the Yule-log and the glittering tree
Twinkling with festive tapers, eyes as bright
Sparkle with Christmas joys and young delight,
As each one gathers with his family.

But I — a waif on earth where'er I roam —
Uprooted with life's bleeding hopes and fears
From that one heart that was my heart's sole home
Feel the old pang pierce through the severing years,
And as I think upon the years to come
That fair star trembles through my falling tears.

Mathilde Blind.

THE FARMER'S INVITATION

COME down to-marra night, an' mind
Don't leave thy fiddle-bag behind.
We 'll shiake a lag an' drink a cup
O' yal to kip wold Chris'mas up.

An' let thy sister tiake thy yarm,
The wa'k woont do 'er any harm:
Ther's noo dirt now to spwile her frock
Var 't is a-vroze so hard 's a rock.

Ther bent noo stranngers that 'ull come,
But only a vew naighbors: zome
Vrom Stowe, an' Combe, an' two ar dree
Vrom uncles up at Rookery.

An' thee woot vine a ruozy fiace,
An' pair ov eyes so black as sloos,
The pirtiest oones in al the pliace.
I'm sure I needen tell thee whose.

We got a back bran', dree girt logs
So much as dree ov us can car:
We 'll put 'em up athirt the dogs,
An' miake a vier to the bar,

An' ev'ry oone wull tell his tiale,
An' ev'ry oone wull zing his zong,
An' ev'ry oone wull drink his yal,
To love an' frien'ship al night long.

We 'll snap the tongs, we 'll have a bal,
We 'll shiake the house, we 'll rise the ruf,
We 'll romp an' miake the maidens squal,
A catchen o'm at bline-man's buff.

Zoo come to-marra night, an' mind
Don't leave thy fiddle-bag behind.
We 'll shiake a lag, an' drink a cup
O' yal to kip wold Chris'mas up.

William Barnes.

The Yule Log

CEREMONY TO THE MAIDS

Wash your hands, or else the fire
Will not tend to your desire;
Unwash'd hands, ye maidens, know,
Dead the fire, though ye blow.

ANOTHER

Wassaile the Trees, that they may beare
You many a Plum, and many a Peare;
For more or lesse fruits they will bring
As you doe give them Wassailing.

Robert Herrick.

The Yule Log

MAKE ME MERRY

MAKE me merry both more and less,
For now is the time of Christymas!

Let no man come into this hall,
Groom, page, nor yet marshall,
But that some sport he bring withal!
For now is the time of Christmas!

If that he say he cannot sing,
Some other sport then let him bring!
That it may please at this feasting!
For now is the time of Christmas!

If he say he can naught do,
Then for my love ask him no mo!
But to the stocks then let him go!
For now is the time of Christmas!

Balliol MS. of about 1540.

COME, BRING WITH A NOISE

From "Hesperides"

COME, bring with a noise,
My merrie, merrie boyes,
The Christmas Log to the firing;
While my good Dame, she
Bids ye all be free,
And drink to your heart's desiring.

With the last yeere's brand
Light the new block, and
For good successe in his spending,
On your Psaltries play,
That sweet luck may
Come while the Log is a-teending.

Drink now the strong Beere,
Cut the white Loafe here,
The while the meat is a-shredding
For the rare Mince Pie,
And the Plums stand by
To fill the Paste that's a-kneading.

Robert Herrick.

A YULE-TIDE SONG

NOW Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum,
And call all our neighbors together,
And when they appear,
Let us make them good cheer,
As will keep out the wind and the weather.

Anonymous.

THE HOLLY BERRY

THEN drink to the holly berry,
With hey down, hey down derry;
The mistletoe we 'll pledge also,
And at Christmas all be merry.

Thomas Miller.

GET IVY AND HOLLY

GET Ivy and Holly and deck up thine house,
And take this same brawn to seethe and to souse.
Provide us good cheer, for thou know'st the old guise:
Old customs, that good be, let no man despise.

At Christmas be merry and thankful withal,
And feast thy poor neighbors, the great with the small.
Yea, all the year long, to the poor let us give:
God's blessing to follow us, while we do live.

Thomas Tusser.

THE CHRISTMAS PIE

From "Hesperides"

COME, guard this night the Christmas Pie,
That the Thiefe, though ne'er so slie,
With his Flesh-hooks don't come nie
To catch it

From him, who all alone sits there,
Having his eyes still in his care,
And a deale of nightly feare,
To watch it.

Robert Herrick.

A WORD OF ADVICE

THIS is now the winter time;
Remember, gentles, then,
That none shall thirst who grow the vine.
Yet give no alms in mean award,
But spread the just, the well-earned board.

Anonymous.

FOR THE PROUD-HEARTED

O MAY those who have richest store,
And do refuse to feast the poor,
Whilst they are served with every dish
That coin can buy or heart can wish —
O may they still have store of meat,
But stomach none, the same to eat.

Poor Robin's Almanack, 1739.

THE TRUE CHRISTMAS

From "Thalia Rediviva"

SO, stick up ivie and the bays,
And then restore the heathen ways.
Green will remind you of the spring,
Though this great day denies the thing;
And mortifies the earth, and all
But your wild revels, and loose hall.
Could you wear flowers, and roses strow
Blushing upon your breast's warm snow.
That very dress your lightness will
Rebuke, and wither at the will.
The brightness of this day we owe
Not unto music, masque nor showe;
Nor gallant furniture, nor plate,

But to the manger's mean estate.
His life while here, as well as birth,
Was but a check to pomp and mirth;
And all man's greatness you may see
Condemned by his humility.
  Then leave your open house and noise,
To welcome him with holy joys,
And the poor shepherds' watchfulness;
Whom light and hymns from heaven did bless.
What you abound with, cast abroad
To those that want, and ease your loade.
Who empties thus will bring more in;
But riot is both loss and sin.
Dress finely what comes not in sight,
And then you keep your Christmas right.

Henry Vaughan.

OLD CHRISTMAS-TIDE

From "Marmion"

HEAP on more wood! — the wind is chill;
  But let it whistle as it will,
We 'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer.
Even heathen yet, the savage Dane
At Iol more deep the mead did drain;

High on the beach his galley drew,
And feasted all his pirate crew;
Then in his low and pine-built hall,
Where shields and axes decked the wall,
They gorged upon the half-dressed steer;
Caroused in seas of sable beer;
While round, in brutal jest, were thrown
The half-gnawed rib and marrow bone,
Or listened all, in grim delight,
While scalds yelled out the joy of fight,
Then forth in frenzy would they hie,
While wildly loose their red locks fly;
And, dancing round the blazing pile,
They make such barbarous mirth the while,
As best might to the mind recall
The boisterous joys of Odin's hall.
And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honor to the holy night:
On Christmas eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas eve the mass was sung;
That holy night, in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;

Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the mistletoe;
Then opened wide the baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf, and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night
That to the cottage, as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.
The fire, with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.

The Wassail round, in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide, her savory goose.
Then came the merry masquers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong,
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the visors made.
But, O! what masquers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'T was Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'T was Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year.

Sir Walter Scott.

WITHIN AND WITHOUT

From "The Vision of Sir Launfal"

WITHIN the hall are song and laughter,
The cheeks of Christmas glow red and jolly,
And sprouting is every corbel and rafter
With lightsome green of ivy and holly;
Through the deep gulf of the chimney wide
Wallows the Yule-log's roaring hide;
The broad flame-pennons droop and flap
And belly and tug as a flag in the wind;
Like a locust shrills the imprisoned sap,
Hunted to death in its galleries blind;
And swift little troops of silent sparks,
Now pausing, now scattering away as in fear,
Go threading the soot-forest's tangled darks
Like herds of startled deer.

But the wind without was eager and sharp,
Of Sir Launfal's gray hair it makes a harp,
And rattles and wrings
The icy strings,
Singing, in dreary monotone,
A Christmas carol of its own,
Whose burden still, as he might guess,
Was — "Shelterless, shelterless, shelterless!"

The voice of the seneschal flared like a torch
As he shouted the wanderer away from the porch,
And he sat in the gateway and saw all night
  The great hall-fire, so cheery and bold,
  Through the window-slits of the castle old,
Build out its piers of ruddy light
Against the drift of the cold.

James Russell Lowell.

HOLLY SONG

BLOW, blow, thou winter winde,
  Thou art not so unkinde,
  As mans ingratitude;
Thy tooth is not so keene,
Because thou art not seene,
  Although thy breath be rude.
Heigh ho, sing heigh ho, unto the greene holly,
Most frendship, is fayning; most Loving, meere folly:
  Then heigh ho, the holly,
  This Life is most jolly.

Freize, freize, thou bitter skie
That dost not bight so nigh
  As benefitts forgot:
Though thou the waters warpe,
Thy sting is not so sharpe,
  As freind remembred not.

Heigh ho, sing heigh ho, unto the greene holly,
Most frendship, is fayning; most Loving, meere folly:
Then heigh ho, the holly,
This Life is most jolly.

William Shakespeare.

AT THE SIGN OF THE JOLLY JACK

YOU merry folk, be of good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year.
From open door you 'll take no harm
By winter if your hearts are warm.
So ope the door, and hear us carol
The burthen of our Christmas moral.
Be ye merry and make good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year;
Scrape the fiddle and beat the drum,
And bury the night ere morning come.

There was an inn beside a track,
As it might be, the Jolly Jack;
Upon a night, whate'er its name,
There kept they Christmas all the same.
They sit in jovial round at table,
While Christ was lying in the stable.
They make merry and have good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year;

They scrape the fiddle and beat the drum,
And they 'll bury the night ere morning come.

The jolly landlord stands him up,
And welcomes all to bite and sup;
He has a hearty face and red,
He knows not Who lies in his shed.
What harm, if he be honest and true,
That he may be Christ's landlord too?
So he makes merry and has good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year;
He scrapes his fiddle and beats his drum,
And he 'll bury the night ere morning come.

The landlord's son sits in his place,
He bows his head and says his grace;
He leads his partner to the dance,
And the light of love is in his glance.
If his thoughts are handsome as his face,
What matter if Christ be in the place?
So he makes merry and has good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year;
He scrapes his fiddle and beats his drum,
And he 'll bury the night ere morning come.

Of all the folk that night, I ween,
Some were honest and some were mean;
If all were honest, 't was well for all,
For Christ was sleeping in the stall.

But never may Englishmen so fare
That they at Christmas should forbear —
To make them merry and have good cheer,
For Christmas comes but once a year;
To scrape the fiddle and beat the drum,
And bury the night ere morning come.

Geoffrey Smith.

THE MAHOGANY TREE

CHRISTMAS is here;
Winds whistle shrill,
Icy and chill,
Little care we:
Little we fear
Weather without,
Sheltered about
The mahogany tree.

Once on the boughs,
Birds of rare plume
Sang, in its bloom;
Night birds are we:
Here we carouse,
Singing like them,
Perched round the stem
Of the jolly old tree.

Here let us sport,
Boys, as we sit;
Laughter and wit
Flashing so free.
Life is but short —
When we are gone,
Let them sing on,
Round the old tree.

Evenings we knew,
Happy as this;
Faces we miss,
Pleasant to see.
Kind hearts and true,
Gentle and just,
Peace to your dust!
We sing round the tree.

Care, like a dun,
Lurks at the gate:
Let the dog wait:
Happy we 'll be!
Drink, every one;
Pile up the coals,
Fill the red bowls,
Round the old tree!

Drain we the cup —
Friend, art afraid?

Spirits are laid
In the Red Sea.
Mantle it up;
Empty it yet;
Let us forget,
Round the old tree.

Sorrows, begone!
Life and its ills,
Duns and their bills,
Bid we to flee.
Come with the dawn,
Blue-devil sprite,
Leave us to-night,
Round the old tree.

W. M. Thackeray.

WASSAILER'S SONG

WASSAIL! wassail! all over the town,
Our toast it is white, and our ale it is brown;
Our bowl is made of a maplin tree;
We be good fellows all; — I drink to thee.

Here 's to our horse, and to his right ear,
God send master a happy new year;

A happy new year as e'er he did see, —
With my wassailing bowl I drink to thee.

Here 's to our mare, and to her right eye,
God send our mistress a good Christmas pie;
A good Christmas pie as e'er I did see, —
With my wassailing bowl I drink to thee.

Here 's to our cow, and to her long tail,
God send our master us never may fail
Of a cup of good beer: I pray you draw near,
And our jolly wassail it 's then you shall hear.

Be here any maids? I suppose here be some;
Sure they will not let young men stand on the
cold stone!
Sing hey O, maids! come trole back the pin,
And the fairest maid in the house let us all in.

Come, butler, come, bring us a bowl of the best;
I hope your sould in heaven will rest;
But if you do bring us a bowl of the small,
Then down fall butler, and bowl and all.

Robert Southwell.

WASSAIL! WASSAIL

WASSAIL! wassail! Ye merry men, hail,
Who brightened the days of old;
What brave conceits, and humorsome feats,
Are sung of our fathers bold!
From morning chime, unto vesper time,
They revelled in careless glee,
And danced at night with spirits as light
As the notes of their minstrelsy.

Wassail! wassail! At the knight's regale
'T was the signal for deep carouse,
Nor there alone, for the joyous tone
Shook many a priestly house;
The monks forgot their bachelor's lot,
Surrounded by goodly cheer,
And raised the cup, in its brim full up,
To the utter contempt of care.

Wassail! wassail! cried the yeoman hale,
As he shouldered his quarter-staff,
And homeward rode, where the spiced ale stood
Awaiting his hearty quaff;
The cot meanwhile, lit up by the smile
Of a frank, good-hearted mirth,

And free to all who might chance to call,
Was the happiest place on earth!

Ainsworth's Magazine, 1848.

MR. WARDLE'S CAROL

From "Pickwick Papers"

I CARE not for Spring; on his fickle wing
Let the blossoms and buds be borne:
He woos them amain with his treacherous rain,
And he scatters them ere the morn.
An inconstant elf, he knows not himself,
Or his own changing mind an hour,
He 'll smile in your face, and with wry grimace,
He 'll wither your youngest flower.

Let the Summer sun to his bright home run,
He shall never be sought by me;
When he 's dimmed by a cloud I can laugh aloud,
And care not how sulky he be;
For his darling child is the madness wild
That sports in fierce fever's train;
And when love is too strong, it don't last long,
As many have found to their pain.

A mild harvest night, by the tranquil light
Of the modest and gentle moon,

Has a far sweeter sheen for me, I ween,
Than the broad and unblushing noon.
But every leaf awakens my grief,
As it lies beneath the tree;
So let Autumn air be never so fair,
It by no means agrees with me.

But my song I troll out, for Christmas stout,
The hearty, the true, and the bold;
A bumper I drain, and with might and main
Give three cheers for this Christmas old.
We 'll usher him in with a merry din
That shall gladden his joyous heart,
And we 'll keep him up while there 's bite or sup,
And in fellowship good we 'll part.

In his fine honest pride, he scorns to hide
One jot of his hard-weather scars;
They 're no disgrace, for there 's much the same
trace
On the cheeks of our bravest tars.
Then again I sing till the roof doth ring,
And it echoes from wall to wall —
To the stout old wight, fair welcome to-night,
As the King of the Seasons all!

Charles Dickens.

Santa Claus and Other Saints

Some sayes, that ever 'gainst that Season comes
Wherein our Saviours Birth is celebrated,
The Bird of Dawning singeth all night long:
And then (they say) no Spirit can walke abroad,
The nights are wholesome, then no Planets strike,
No Faiery talkes, nor Witch hath power to Charme
So hallowed, and so gracious is the time.

William Shakespeare.

Santa Claus and Other Saints

SANTA CLAUS

HE comes in the night! He comes in the night!
He softly, silently comes,
While the little brown heads on the pillows so white
Are dreaming of bugles and drums.
He cuts thro' the snow like a ship thro' the foam,
While the white flakes around him whirl.
Who tells him I know not, but he findeth the home
Of each good little boy and girl.

His sleigh it is long, and deep, and wide;
It will carry a host of things,
While dozens of drums hang over the side,
With the sticks sticking under the strings.
And yet not the sound of a drum is heard,
Not a bugle blast is blown,
As he mounts to the chimney-top like a bird,
And drops to the hearth like a stone.

The little red stockings he silently fills,
Till the stockings will hold no more;

The bright little sleds for the great snow hills
  Are quickly set down on the floor.
Then Santa Claus mounts to the roof like a bird,
  And glides to his seat in the sleigh;
Not the sound of a bugle or drum is heard
  As he noiselessly gallops away.

He rides to the East, and he rides to the West,
  Of his goodies he touches not one;
He eateth the crumbs of the Christmas feast
  When the dear little folks are done.
Old Santa Claus doeth all that he can;
  This beautiful mission is his;
Then, children, be good to the little old man
  When you find who the little man is.

Anonymous.

A SONG OF SAINT FRANCIS

THERE was a Knight of Bethlehem
  Whose wealth was tears and sorrows;
His men-at-arms were little lambs,
  His trumpeters were sparrows.
His castle was a wooden cross,
  On which He hung so high;
His helmet was a crown of thorns,
  Whose crest did touch the sky.

Henry Neville Maugham.

A VISIT FROM ST. NICHOLAS

'TWAS the night before Christmas, when all
through the house
Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;
The stockings were hung by the chimney with
care,
In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;
The children were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of sugar-plums danced in their heads;
And mamma in her kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had just settled our brains for a long winter's
nap —
When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave a lustre of midday to objects below;
When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
But a miniature sleigh and eight tiny reindeer,
With a little old driver, so lively and quick
I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick!
More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,
And he whistled and shouted, and called them by
name:

"Now, Dasher! now, Dancer! now, Prancer and
Vixen!
On, Comet! on, Cupid! on, Donder and Blitzen!
To the top of the porch, to the top of the wall!
Now dash away, dash away, dash away all!"
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,
When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the
sky,
So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,
With the sleigh full of toys — and St. Nicholas,
too.
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof
The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a
bound.
He was dressed all in fur from his head to his foot,
And his clothes were all tarnished with ashes and
soot;
A bundle of toys he had flung on his back,
And he looked like a pedler just opening his pack.
His eyes, how they twinkled! his dimples, how
merry!
His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;
His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,
And the beard on his chin was as white as the
snow.
The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,

And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face and a little round belly
That shook, when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.
He was chubby and plump — a right jolly old elf;
And I laughed, when I saw him, in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye and a twist of his head
Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.
He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,
And filled all the stockings; then turned with a jerk,
And laying his finger aside of his nose,
And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.
He sprang in his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,
And away they all flew like the down of a thistle;
But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight:
"Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night!"

Clement C. Moore.

SAINT NICHOLAS — HIS ROUNDELAY

ON Christmas Eve
You would scarce believe
How early the sand-man came a-creeping;
By the way each head
Went into the bed
When prayers were said

You 'd have thought them sleeping.
(You would really have thought the children sleeping.)
Sing Fol-de-rol-dol-diddle-lol-day,
Saint Nicholas — his roundelay.

Old Saint Nick
With his usual trick
Came upon the roof with a terrible clatter;
And Dolly and Sue,
And Polly and Prue,
And Jonathan too,
Knew what was the matter.
(But of course they didn't wake up at the clatter.)
Sing Fol-de-rol-dol-diddle-lol-day,
Saint Nicholas — his roundelay.

Little Miss Polly,
Dreamed of a dolly,
Hung by the wrist to a Christmas tree,
And a candy boar,
With an echoing roar
From the e-qua-tor
To the frozen sea.
(An astonishing boar, 'twixt you and me.)
Sing Fol-de-rol-dol-diddle-lol-day,
Saint Nicholas — his roundelay.

. . . . . .

Ah, Christmas Day!
The old folks say
They sleep through the night and it doesn't matter;
For Dolly and Sue,
And Polly and Prue,
And Jonathan too,
Make up for the clatter
Of Nick in the night, that 's the truth of the matter.
Sing Fol-de-rol-dol-diddle-lol-day,
Saint Nicholas — his roundelay.

Robert L. Munger.

KRISS KRINGLE

JUST as the moon was fading
Amid her misty rings,
And every stocking was stuffed
With childhood's precious things,

Old Kriss Kringle looked round,
And saw on the elm-tree bough,
High-hung, an oriole's nest,
Silent and empty now.

"Quite like a stocking," he laughed,
"Pinned up there on the tree!
Little I thought the birds
Expected a present from me!"

Then old Kriss Kingle, who loves
A joke as well as the best,
Dropped a handful of flakes
In the oriole's empty nest.

Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

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SAINT BRANDAN

SAINT BRANDAN sails the northern main;
The brotherhood of saints are glad.
He greets them once, he sails again;
So late! such storms! The saint is mad!

He heard, across the howling seas,
Chime convent-bells on wintry nights;
He saw, on spray-swept Hebrides,
Twinkle the monastery-lights;

But north, still north, Saint Brandan steered;
And now no bells, no convents more!
The hurtling Polar Lights are neared,
The sea without a human shore.

At last (it was the Christmas-night;
Stars shone after a day of storm)
He sees float past an iceberg white,
And on it — Christ! — a living form.

That furtive mien, that scowling eye,
Of hair that red and tufted fell,
It is — oh, where shall Brandan fly? —
The traitor Judas, out of hell!

Palsied with terror, Brandan sate;
The moon was bright, the iceberg near.
He hears a voice sigh humbly, "Wait!
By high permission I am here.

"One moment wait, thou holy man!
On earth my crime, my death, they knew;
My name is under all men's ban:
Ah! tell them of my respite too.

"Tell them, one blessed Christmas-night
(It was the first after I came,
Breathing self-murder, frenzy, spite,
To rue my guilt in endless flame), —

"I felt, as I in torment lay
'Mid the souls plagued by heavenly power,
An angel touch mine arm, and say, —
'Go hence, and cool thyself an hour!'

"'Ah! whence this mercy, Lord?' I said.
'The leper recollect,' said he,
'Who asked the passers-by for aid,
In Joppa, and thy charity.'

"Then I remembered how I went,
In Joppa, through the public street,
One morn when the sirocco spent
Its storms of dust with burning heat;

"And in the street a leper sate,
Shivering with fever, naked, old;
Sand raked his sores from heel to pate,
The hot wind fevered him fivefold.

"He gazed upon me as I passed,
And murmured, 'Help me, or I die!'
To the poor wretch my cloak I cast
Saw him look eased, and hurried by.

. . . . . .

"Once every year, when carols wake,
On earth, the Christmas-night's repose,
Arising from the sinner's lake,
I journey to these healing snows.

"I stanch with ice my burning breast,
With silence balm my whirling brain.
O Brandan! to this hour of rest,
That Joppan leper's ease was pain."

Tears started to Saint Brandan's eyes;
He bowed his head, he breathed a prayer,
Then looked — and lo, the frosty skies!
The iceberg, and no Judas there!

Matthew Arnold.

GOOD KING WENCESLAS

GOOD King Wenceslas looked out,
On the Feast of Stephen,
When the snow lay round about,
Deep, and crisp, and even:

Brightly shone the moon that night,
Though the frost was cruel,
When a poor man came in sight,
Gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me,
If thou know'st it, telling,
Yonder peasant, who is he?
Where and what his dwelling?"

"Sire, he lives a good league hence,
Underneath the mountain;
Right against the forest fence,
By St. Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine,
Bring me pine logs hither;
Thou and I will see him dine,
When we bear them thither."

Page and monarch forth they went,
  Forth they went together;
Through the rude wind's wild lament,
  And the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now,
  And the wind blows stronger;
Fails my heart, I know not how,
  I can go no longer."

"Mark my footsteps, good my page!
  Tread thou in them boldly;
Thou shalt find the winter's rage
  Freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod,
  Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
  Which the saint had printed.

Therefore, Christian men, be sure,
  Wealth or rank possessing,
Ye who now will bless the poor,
  Shall yourselves find blessing.

John Mason Neale.

KING WITLAF'S DRINKING-HORN

WITLAF, a king of the Saxons,
Ere yet his last he breathed,
To the merry monks of Croyland
His drinking-horn bequeathed, —

That, whenever they sat at their revels,
And drank from the golden bowl,
They might remember the donor,
And breathe a prayer for his soul.

So sat they once at Christmas,
And bade the goblet pass;
In their beards the red wine glistened
Like dew-drops in the grass.

They drank to the soul of Witlaf,
They drank to Christ the Lord,
And to each of the Twelve Apostles,
Who had preached His holy word.

They drank to the Saints and Martyrs
Of the dismal days of yore,
And as soon as the horn was empty
They remembered one Saint more.

And the reader droned from the pulpit,
  Like the murmur of many bees,
The legend of good Saint Guthlac,
  And Saint Basil's homilies;

Till the great bells of the convent,
  From their prison in the tower,
Guthlac and Bartholomæus,
  Proclaimed the midnight hour.

And the Yule-log cracked in the chimney,
  And the Abbot bowed his head,
And the flamelets flapped and flickered,
  But the Abbot was stark and dead.

Yet still in his pallid fingers
  He clutched the golden bowl,
In which, like a pearl dissolving,
  Had sunk and dissolved his soul.

But not for this their revels
  The jovial monks forbore,
For they cried, "Fill high the goblet!
  We must drink to one Saint more."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

A SAINT IN DISGUISE

IT 'S Christmas Eve, and the dogs are a-cold,
And the star 's in the sky and the flock 's in the fold.

A pedler came to the homestead gate
With his pack and his pike, and weary was he;
He said, "See wares from heaven to buy you!
Who will chaffer his heart with me?"

It 's Christmas Eve, and the dogs are a-cold,
And the star 's in the sky, and the flock 's in the fold.

The farmer laughed: "For a quittance from hell
Here 's all I 've left of a heart for ye!"
Quoth the goodwife: "For a heavenly mansion
Take, and you 're welcome, my heart in fee!"

It 's Christmas Eve, and the dogs are a-cold,
And the star 's in the sky, and the flock 's in the fold.

The younker brought him a kingly crown,
The men got glory in bliss to be;
The maids chose harps and golden garments,
Cried "Good-e'en!" and "Good-by!" said he.

It 's Christmas Eve, and the dogs are a-cold,
And the star 's in the sky, and the flock 's in the fold.

But the youngest of all said never a word,
Her hand to her flaxen head held she;
Till, just as he passed the door, she whispered,
"Here 's my heart, as a gift for thee!"

It 's Christmas Eve, and the dogs are a-cold,
And the star 's in the sky, and the flock 's in the fold.

It 's feasting day, and the feast 's in heaven,
And there are our folk, all fair to see.
"Have they left no room for My own little maiden?
Come, she must sit on the throne with Me!"

It 's Christmas Eve, and the dogs are a-cold,
And the star 's in the sky, and the lamb 's in the fold!

W. G. Collingwood.

ST. BRIDE

OH, Baby Christ, so dear to me,
Sang Bridget Bride:
How sweet thou art,
My baby dear,
Heart of my heart!

Heavy her body was with thee,
Mary, beloved of One in Three,
Sang Bridget Bride —
Mary, who bore thee, little lad;
But light her heart was, light and glad,
With God's love clad.

Sit on my knee,
Sang Bridget Bride;
Sit here,
O Baby dear,
Close to my heart, my heart,
For I thy foster-mother am,
My helpless lamb!
Oh, have no fear,
Sang good St. Bride.

None, none,
No fear have I;
So let me cling
Close to thy side,
While thou dost sing,
O Bridget Bride!

My Lord, my Prince, I sing:
My Baby dear, my King!
Sang Bridget Bride.

Fiona Macleod.

TWO CHRISTMAS SAINTS

TIME was, as Christmas Eve drew near,
Of Santa and his twelve reindeer,
A little lad, I sat and dreamed —
A presence real the old Saint seemed,
And on that Night of Nights, I 'd hark
To hear his sleigh bells in the dark,
And watch, for fear to miss his face
When he came down the chimney-place.

But now, though day-dreams throng my mind,
No trace of Santa Claus I find!
My Christmas saint has changed. Instead
Of jolly, wrinkled visage red,
Behold a lady where she stands,
The fairest maid in all the lands!
Her thrall am I for weal or woe —
Sweet saint, whose crown is mistletoe!

M. P. Caruthers.

By permission of "Collier's Weekly."

Christmas Day

Villagers all, this frosty tide,
Let your doors swing open wide,
Though wind may follow, and snow beside,
Yet draw us in by your fire to bide;
Joy shall be yours in the morning!

Those who at Christmas do repine,
And would fain hence despatch him,
May they with old Duke Humphrey dine,
Or else may Squire Ketch catch 'em.

Christmas Day

CHRISTMAS

C hrist, Christ, is born to-day!
H oly be thy holiday.
R ise betimes, and haste away,
I n thy church to kneel and pray,
S urely from thine heart to say:
T hou, O Lord, will I obey.

M any poor around there be —
A lms give thou, and sympathy,
S o God's blessing 'light on thee.

Lady Lindsay.

A CHRISTMAS GREETING

A MERRY Christmas morning
To each and every one!
The rose has kissed the dawning,
And the gold is in the sun.

And may the Christmas splendor
A joyous greeting bear,
Of love that 's true and tender
And faith that 's sweet and fair.

Anonymous.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

MAY I say to you this morning,
In the good old-fashioned way,
"Merry Christmas, dear, God bless you!" —
Other things one well might say;
But I like the plain old phrasing
For this day of all the year —
"Merry Christmas, dear, God bless you
With His best of Christmas cheer."

Mary C. Low.

CHRISTMAS DAY

A DAY of respite, this;
A day of purest bliss
Wherein in love to plan
Good-will to Man.

A festival of Joys
Wherein no thing annoys;
A time of cheer and mirth,
And Peace on Earth.

A time for smiles and play,
And yet withal a day
For thoughtful deeds, and good,
Of Brotherhood.

A day for sunny rifts,
A day for loving gifts;
For Kindness bounteous
God gave it us.

John Kendrick Bangs.

By permission of "Collier's Weekly."

THE CHRISTMAS BOX

GLADLY the boy, with Christmas Box in hand,
Throughout the town his devious route pursues;
And, of his master's customers, implores
The yearly mite: often his cash he shakes;
The which, perchance, of coppers few consists,
Whose dulcet jingle fills his little soul
With joy, as boundless as the debtor feels,
When, from the bailiff's rude, uncivil gripe,
His friends redeem him, and, with pity fraught,
The claims of all his creditors discharge.

THE HOLLY AND THE IVY

THE Holly and the Ivy,
Now both are full well grown;
Of all the trees that spring in wood,
The Holly bears the crown.
The Holly bears a blossom,
As white as lily flow'r;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our sweet Saviour,
To be our sweet Saviour.

The Holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To do poor sinners good.
The Holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
On Christmas day in the morn,
On Christmas day in the morn.

The Holly bears a bark,
As bitter as any gall;
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
For to redeem us all.

The Holly and the Ivy,
  Now both are full well grown;
Of all the trees that spring in wood,
  The Holly bears the crown
  The Holly bears the crown.

Old English

RING THE BELLS

RING the bells,
  Ring the bells,
Ring the merry Christmas bells,
  And let their voice resound
    Around, around,
Till o'er the leas and o'er the fells
The gladsome echo loudly tells
    How we to-day
    Are blithe and gay,
And how for all sad hearts we pray.
    Ring the bells,
    Ring the bells,
Ring the joyful Christmas bells!

    Ring the bells,
    Ring the bells,
Ring the merry Christmas bells.
  So ring them high and low,
    O'er ice and snow,

O'er craggêd hills and silent dells,
While round the earth the message swells,
How we to-day
Are blithe and gay,
And how for all sad hearts we pray.
Ring the bells,
Ring the bells,
Ring the joyful Christmas bells!

Lady Lindsay.

MERRY CHRISTMAS, EVERY ONE!

IN the rush of the merry morning,
When the red burns through the gray,
And the wintry world lies waiting
For the glory of the day,
Then we hear a fitful rushing
Just without, upon the stair,
See two white phantoms coming,
Catch the gleam of sunny hair.

Are they Christmas fairies, stealing
Rows of little socks to fill?
Are they Angels floating hither
With their message of good-will?

What sweet spell are these elves weaving,
  As like larks they chirp and sing?
Are these palms of peace from heaven
  That these lovely spirits bring?

Rosy feet upon the threshold,
  Eager faces peeping through,
With the first red ray of sunshine
  Chanting cherubs come in view;
Mistletoe and gleaming holly,
  Symbols of a blessed day,
In their chubby hands they carry,
  Streaming all along the way.

Well we know them, never weary
  Of their innocent surprise:
Waiting, watching, listening always
  With full hearts and tender eyes,
While our little household angels,
  White and golden in the sun,
Greet us with the sweet old welcome —
  "Merry Christmas, every one!"

Anonymous.

FOR THE WANDERER

FOR all poor souls we 'll strew the feast,
With kindly heart and free;
One Father owns us, and at least
To-day we 'll brothers be.
Away with pride
This holy tide,
For it is Christmas morning!

So God bless us one and all,
With hearts and hearthstones warm,
And may He prosper great and small,
And keep us out of harm;
And teach us still
His sweet good-will
This merry Christmas morning.

Edwin Waugh.

THE PROMISE OF CHRISTMAS DAY

THE shops are decked; green wreaths hang fair to see;
Our town is gay with mirth and jollity;
The people crowd, and laugh and dance in hall —
'T is Christmas Day, a merry festival!

And sweet the story how, from Heaven's own gate,
The King's Son came, so left His mighty state,
While angels sang, "Glory to God on high,
And on earth peace, for Christ new-born doth lie."

Then shepherds marvelled, and a beauteous star
Guided the wise men from the Orient far,
To bend the knee where, in poor stable-rest,
The Virgin-Mother clasped her babe on breast.

Yet some there be that turn aside and weep:
Some in whose life grief's canker gnaws o'er-deep,
Some racked by pain or crushed by blindness' pall,
And some to cruel sickness bound in thrall;

Some that stretch helpless hands across the flood
Which bore their dear ones from all worldly good —
Fain would they drag those pale ghosts back, and cry,
"If Death take all I love, then I must die!"

And some starve daily, deeming rich folk hard,
While others from love's comfort stand debarr'd,
And some burn fierce in hate, revenge or wrong —
Such fever, bred of injury, stays long.

Some, groping at Faith's door in misty doubt,
Are worn by conflict, from the Truth shut out.
To all these woful souls a Christmas morn
Brings but new grief and weariness forlorn.

Then bid them gaze toward Calvary's dark hill,
Where He, our Sacrifice, bleeds for us still —
Sinless, compassionate — for me, for you.
Yea, mortal anguish to the full He knew.

Misjudged He was, poor, mocked, in thought most lone;
Scarce counted He a scrip or staff His own.
He wept, ne'er laughed, and His few years on earth
Were toilsome, void of praise, success, or mirth.

Faint hearts! Christ's message wings not to the glad.
He calls the blind, the lame, the sick, the sad
The Christmas of the Sorrowful, for sure,
Within His own short span did He endure.

When here His latest wintry days were spent
He wrestled sore in prayer, and silent went
Out to the desert, sorrow-led, where dim
The future loomed, and Death encompassed Him.

His hours as holy stairs led up to God —
Steps that His aching, bruisèd feet slow trod.
Dwell ye on this, ye that repine and fret,
That He may lift and walk beside you yet.

Bare earth and naked trees on every side
We see around us at chill Christmas-tide;
Yet, later, shall the crocus buds of gold
Flame o'er this dank and desolate brown mould.

So shines the promise of each Christmas Day;
Though dark our path, our Guide shall lead the way.
Here is good cheer, for Christ hath taught us peace —
The Man of Sorrows bids our sorrow cease.

Lady Lindsay.

A CHRISTMAS DAY PRAYER

ETERNAL Father, who didst create,
In whom we live and to whose bosom move,
To all men be Thy name known, which is Love,
Till its loud praises sound at heaven's high gate.
Perfect Thy kingdom in our passing state,
That here on earth Thou may'st as well approve
Our service as Thou ownest theirs above,
Whose joy we echo, and in pain await.

Grant body and soul each day their daily bread:
And should in spite of grace fresh woe begin,
Even as our anger soon is past and dead
Be thy remembrance mortal of our sin:
By Thee in paths of peace Thy sheep be led,
And in the vale of terror comforted.

Robert Bridges.

PEACE ON EARTH

I HEARD the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat,
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearthstones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead, nor doth He sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Henry W. Longfellow.

A MEDITATION FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

CONSIDER, O my soul, what morn is this!
Whereon the eternal Lord of all things made
For us, poor mortals, and our endless bliss,
Came down from heaven; and, in a manger laid,
The first, rich offerings of our ransom paid.
Consider, O my soul, what morn is this!

Consider what estate of fearful woe
Had then been ours had He refused this birth;
From sin to sin tossed vainly to and fro,
Hell's playthings, o'er a doomed and helpless earth!
Had He from us withheld His priceless worth,
Consider man's estate of fearful woe!

Consider to what joys He bids thee rise,
Who comes, Himself, life's bitter cup to drain!
Ah! look on this sweet Child, whose innocent eyes,
Ere all be done, shall close in mortal pain,
That thou at last Love's Kingdom may'st attain:
Consider to what joys He bids thee rise!

Consider all this wonder, O my soul:
And in thine inmost shrine make music sweet!
Yea, let the world, from furthest pole to pole,
Join in thy praises this dread birth to greet!
Kneeling to kiss thy Saviour's infant feet!
Consider all this wonder, O my soul!

Selwyn Image.

THE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

HARK! the Christmas bells are ringing —
Ringing through the frosty air —
Happiness to each one bringing,
And release from toil and care.

How the merry peal is swelling
From the gray old crumbling tower,
To the simplest creature telling
Of Almighty love and power.

Ankle-deep the snow is lying,
Every spray is clothed in white,
Yet abroad the folk are hying,
Brisk and busy, gay and light.

Now fresh helps and aid are offered
To the agêd and the poor,
And rare love exchanges proffered
At the lowliest cottage door.

Neighbors shaking hands and greeting,
No one sorrowing, no one sad,
Children, loving parents meeting,
Young and old alike are glad.

Then while Christmas bells are ringing,
Rich and poor, your voices raise,
And — your simple carol singing —
Waft to heaven your grateful praise.

Anonymous.

A CHRISTMAS CHIME

KEEP time, keep time, glad Christmas chime!
Loud, louder sing thy song sublime;
Ne'er half enough can e'er be told
Of that dear story, sweet and old.
Hark, men and women — children, too —
List to the wondrous tale anew,
How long ago, in land afar,
The shepherds saw the shining star;
Heard echoed strains of harp and lyre
Attuned to thrill of angel choir.

Keep time, keep time, wild, joyful chime!
Bid every heart keep Christmas time —

Let there be none so worn and weary,
Let there be none so lone and dreary,
That thy rich music may not fill
With happiness and fond good-will:
With just a bit of hope and cheer,
A firmer trust in heaven near,
A sense of sacred, new-found rest,
That Jesus sleeps on Mary's breast.

Keep time, keep time, blest Christmas chime!
Repeat thy message true, sublime,
Unto the mighty, to the lowly,
Unto the sinner, to the holy:
Bid them live on in gentle peace,
Their strife and hatred all to cease;
And bid them come, not, as of old,
With frankincense, myrrh, gems and gold,
But with the nobler — love's own proffer —
Unto their God their hearts to offer.

Kathleen Kavanagh.

PSALM FOR CHRISTMAS DAY

FAIREST of morning lights appear,
Thou blest and gaudy day,
On which was born our Saviour dear;
Arise and come away!

This day prevents His day of doom;
  His mercy now is nigh;
The mighty God of Love is come,
  The Dayspring from on high!

Behold the great Creator makes
  Himself an house of clay,
A robe of Virgin-flesh He takes,
  Which He will wear for aye.

Hark! hark! the wise Eternal Word
  Like a weak infant cries:
In form of servant is the Lord,
  And God in cradle lies.

. . . . . .

Join then, all hearts that are not stone,
  And all our voices prove,
To celebrate this Holy One,
  The God of peace and love.

Thomas Pestel.

CHRISTMAS ONCE IS CHRISTMAS STILL

THE silent skies are full of speech
  For who hath ears to hear;
The winds are whispering each to each,
The moon is calling to the beech,
And stars their sacred mission teach,
  Of Faith, and Love, and Fear.

But once the sky its silence broke,
And song o'erflowed the earth,
The midnight air with glory shook,
And angels mortal language spoke,
When God our human nature took,
In Christ the Saviour's birth.

And Christmas once is Christmas still:
The gates through which He came,
And forests wild and murmuring rill,
And fruitful field and breezy hill,
And all that else the wide world fill,
Are vocal with His name.

Shall we not listen while they sing,
This latest Christmas morn,
And music hear in everything,
And faithful lives in tribute bring
To the great song which greets the King
Who comes when Christ is born?

The sky can still remember
The earliest Christmas morn,
When in the cold December
The Saviour Christ was born;
And still in darkness clouded,
And still in noonday light,
It feels its far depths crowded
With Angels fair and bright.

O never failing splendor!
  O never silent song!
Still keep the green earth tender,
  Still keep the gray earth strong;
Still keep the brave earth dreaming
  Of deeds that shall be done,
While children's lives come streaming
  Like sunbeams from the sun.

No star unfolds its glory,
  No trumpet's wind is blown,
But tells the Christmas story
  In music of its own.
No eager strife of mortals,
  In busy fields or town,
But sees the open portals
  Through which the Christ came down.

O Angels sweet and splendid,
  Throng in our hearts, and sing
The wonders which attended
  The coming of the King;
Till we, too, boldly pressing
  Where once the Angel trod,
Climb Bethlehem's Hill of Blessing,
  And find the Son of God.

Phillips Brooks.

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A CHRISTMAS SERMON

From "Christmas Eve"

TAKE all in a word: the truth in God's breast
Lies trace for trace upon ours impressed;
Though he is so bright and we so dim,
We are made in his image to witness him:
And were no eye in us to tell,
Instructed by no inner sense,
The light of heaven from the dark of hell,
That light would want its evidence, —
Though justice, good and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
No mere exposition of morality
Made or in part or in totality,
Should win you to give it worship, therefore:
And, if no better proof you will care for,
Whom do you count the worst man upon earth?
Be sure, he knows, in his conscience, more
Of right what is, than arrives at birth
In the best man's acts that we bow before:
This last knows better — true, but my fact is,
'T is one thing to know, and another to practise.
And thence I conclude that the real God-function

Is to furnish a motive and injunction
For practising what we know already.
And such an injunction and such a motive
As the God in Christ, do you waive, and "heady,
High-minded," hang your tablet-votive
Outside the fane on a finger-post?
Morality to the uttermost,
Supreme in Christ as we all confess,
Why need we prove would avail no jot
To make him God, if God he were not?
What is the point where himself lays stress?
Does the precept run "Believe in good,
"In justice, truth now understood
"For the first time?" — or, "Believe in me,
"Who lived and died, yet essentially,
"Am Lord of Life?" Whoever can take
The same to his heart and for mere love's sake
Conceive of the love, — that man obtains
A new truth; no conviction gains
Of an old one only, made intense
By a fresh appeal to his faded sense.

Robert Browning.

THE MYSTIC'S CHRISTMAS

"ALL hail!" the bells of Christmas rang,
"All hail!" the monks at Christmas sang,
The merry monks who kept with cheer
The gladdest day of all their year.

But still apart, unmoved thereat,
A pious elder brother sat
Silent, in his accustomed place,
With God's sweet peace upon his face.

"Why sitt'st thou thus?" his brethren cried.
"It is the blessèd Christmas-tide;
The Christmas lights are all aglow,
The sacred lilies bud and blow.

"Above our heads the joy-bells ring,
Without the happy children sing,
And all God's creatures hail the morn
On which the holy Christ was born!

"Rejoice with us; no more rebuke
Our gladness with thy quiet look."
The gray monk answered: "Keep, I pray,
Even as ye list, the Lord's birthday.

"Let heathen Yule fires flicker red
Where thronged refectory feasts are spread;
With mystery-play and masque and mime
And wait-songs speed the holy time!

"The blindest faith may haply save;
The Lord accepts the things we have;
And reverence, howsoe'er it strays,
May find at last the shining ways.

"They needs must grope who cannot see,
The blade before the ear must be;
As ye are feeling I have felt,
And where ye dwell I too have dwelt.

"But now, beyond the things of sense,
Beyond occasions and events,
I know, through God's exceeding grace,
Release from form and time and place.

"I listen, from no mortal tongue,
To hear the song the angels sung;
And wait within myself to know
The Christmas lilies bud and blow.

"The outward symbols disappear
From him whose inward sight is clear;

And small must be the choice of days
To him who fills them all with praise!

"Keep while you need it, brothers mine,
With honest zeal your Christmas sign,
But judge not him who every morn
Feels in his heart the Lord Christ born!"

John Greenleaf Whittier.

A CHRISTMAS ANTIPHONE

THOU whose birth on earth
Angels sang to men,
While Thy stars made mirth,
Saviour, at Thy birth,
This day born again.

As this night was bright
With Thy cradle-ray,
Very light of light,
Turn the wild world's night
To Thy perfect day.

God whose feet made sweet
Those wild ways they trod,
From thy fragrant feet,
Staining field and street
With the blood of God;

God whose breast is rest
In time of strife,
In Thy secret breast
Sheltering souls opprest
From the heat of life;

God whose eyes are skies,
Love-lit as with spheres
By the lights that rise
To Thy watching eyes,
Orbê lights of tears;

God whose heart hath part
In all grief that is,
Was not man's the dart
That went through Thine heart,
And the wound not his?

Where the pale souls wail,
Held in bonds of death,
Where all spirits quail,
Came Thy Godhead pale
Still from human breath —

Pale from life and strife,
Wan with manhood, came
Forth of mortal life,
Pierced as with a knife,
Scarred as with a flame.

Thou the Word and Lord
  In all time and space
Heard, beheld, adored,
With all ages poured
  Forth before Thy face.

Lord, what worth in earth
  Drew Thee down to die?
What therein was worth,
  Lord, Thy death and birth?
What beneath Thy sky?

Light above all love
  By Thy love was lit,
And brought down the Dove,
Feathered from above
  With the wings of it.

From the height of night,
  Was not Thine the star
That led forth with might,
By no worldly light,
  Wise men from afar?

Yet the wise men's eyes
  Saw Thee not more clear
Than they saw Thee rise,
Who in shepherd's guise
  Drew as poor men near.

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Yet thy poor endure,
  And are with us yet;
Be Thy name a sure
Refuge for Thy poor
  Whom men's eyes forget.

Thou whose ways we praise,
  Clear alike and dark,
Keep our works and ways,
This, and all Thy days,
  Safe inside Thine ark.

Who shall keep Thy sheep,
  Lord, and lose not one?
Who, save one, shall keep,
Lest the shepherds sleep?
  Who beside the Son?

From the grave-deep wave,
  From the sword and flame,
Thou, even Thou, shall save
Souls of king and slave
  Only by Thy Name.

Light not born with morn,
  Or her fires above,
Jesus, virgin-born,
Held of men in scorn,
  Turn their scorn to love.

Thou whose face gives grace
As the sun's doth heat,
Let Thy sunbright face
Lighten time and space
  Here beneath Thy feet.

Bid our peace increase,
  Thou that madest morn;
Bid oppressions cease,
Bid the night be peace,
  Bid the day be born.

Algernon Charles Swinburne.

BRYNGYNGE IN THE BORE'S HEAD

Caput Apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino.

THE boar's head in hand bring I,
  With garlands gay and rosemary;
I pray you all sing merrily,
  Qui estis in convivio.

The boar's head, I understand,
Is the chief service in this land;
Look wherever it be found,
  Servite cum cantico.

Be glad, lords, both more or less,
For this hath ordained our steward
To cheer you all this Christmas,
The boar's head with mustard.

Old English.

CHRISTMAS EVERGREENS

WHEN winter nights grow long,
And winds without blow cold,
We sit in a ring round the warm wood fire
And listen to stories old!
And we try to look grave (as maids should be)
When the men bring in boughs of the laurel tree.
O the laurel, the evergreen tree!
The poets have laurels — and why not we?

How pleasant, when night falls down,
And hides the wintry sun,
To see them come in to the blazing fire,
And know that their work is done;
Whilst many bring in, with a laugh or rhyme,
Green branches of holly for Christmas time!
O the holly, the bright green holly!
It tells (like a tongue) that the times are jolly!

Sometimes — (in *our* grave house
Observe this happeneth not)
But at times, the evergreen laurel boughs
And the holly are all forgot!
And then! what then? Why, the men laugh low,
And hang up a branch of the mistletoe!
Oh, brave is the laurel! and brave is the holly!
But the mistletoe banisheth melancholy!
Ah, nobody knows, nor ever *shall* know,
What is done under the mistletoe!

Barry Cornwall.

THE MISTLETOE

'NEATH mistletoe, should chance arise,
You may be happy if you 're wise.
Though bored you lie with pantomime
And Christmas fare and Christmas rhyme —
One fine old custom don't despise.

If you 're a man of enterprise,
You 'll find, I venture to surmise,
'T is pleasant then at Christmas time
'Neath mistletoe!

You see they scarcely can disguise
The sparkle of their pretty eyes;

And no one thinks it is a crime,
When goes the merry Christmas chime,
A rare old rite to exercise
'Neath mistletoe!

J. Ashby Sterry.

UNDER THE HOLLY BOUGH

YE who have scorn'd each other,
Or injured friend or brother,
In this fast-fading year;
Ye who, by word or deed,
Hath made a kind heart bleed,
Come gather here.
Let sinn'd against and sinning
Forget their strife's beginning;
Be links no longer broken,
Be sweet forgiveness spoken,
Under the holly bough.

Ye who have lov'd each other,
Sister and friend and brother,
In this fast-fading year;
Mother, and sire, and child,
Young man and maiden mild,
Come gather here;
And let your hearts grow fonder,

As memory shall ponder
  Each past unbroken vow.
Old loves, and younger wooing,
Are sweet in the renewing,
  Under the holly bough.

Ye who have nourished sadness,
Estranged from hope and gladness,
  In this fast-fading year;
Ye with o'erburdened mind,
Made aliens from your kind,
  Come gather here.
Let not the useless sorrow
Pursue you night and morrow;
  If e'er you hoped — hope now;
Take heart; uncloud your faces,
And join in our embraces
  Under the holly bough.

Charles Mackay.

THE HOLLY

THE holly! the holly! oh, twine it with bay —
  Come give the holly a song;
For it helps to drive stern winter away,
  With his garments so sombre and long;

It peeps through the trees with its berries of red,
And its leaves of burnished green,
When the flowers and fruits have long been dead,
And not even a daisy is seen.
Then sing to the holly, the Christmas holly,
That hangs over peasant and king;
While we laugh and carouse 'neath its glittering boughs,
To the Christmas holly we 'll sing.

Eliza Cook.

MISTLETOE AND HOLLY

THE frost and snow of mistletoe,
The warmth of holly berry,
These I combine, O lady mine,
To make thy yule-tide merry;
And shouldst thou learn, sweet, to return
My love, nor deem it folly,
Twined in thy hair the snow fruit wear,
And on thy breast the holly.

Alice R. Taggart.

A LULLABY FOR CHRISTMAS

SLEEP, baby, sleep! The mother sings:
Heaven's angels kneel and fold their wings.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

Sleep, baby, sleep! The father cries:
Stars lean and worship from the skies.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

With swathes of scented hay Thy bed
By Mary's hand at eve was spread.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

At midnight came the shepherds, they
Whom angels wakened by the way.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

And three kings from the East afar,
Ere dawn, came, guided by Thy star.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

They brought Thee gifts of gold and gems,
Pure Orient pearls, rich diadems.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

But Thou, who liest slumbering there,
Art King of kings, earth, stars, and air.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

Sleep, baby, sleep! The shepherds sing:
Through earth, through heaven, hosannas ring.
Sleep, baby, sleep!

John Addington Symonds.

CHRISTMAS TREASURES

I COUNT my treasures o'er with care, —
The little toy my darling knew,
A little sock of faded hue,
A little lock of golden hair.

Long years ago this holy time,
My little one — my all to me —
Sat robed in white upon my knee
And heard the merry Christmas chime.

"Tell me, my little golden-head,
If Santa Claus should come to-night,
What shall he bring my baby bright, —
What treasure for my boy?" I said.

And then he named this little toy,
While in his round and mournful eyes
There came a look of sweet surprise,
That spake his quiet, trustful joy.

And as he lisped his evening prayer
He asked the boon with childish grace,
Then, toddling to the chimney-place,
He hung this little stocking there.

That night, while lengthening shadows crept,
I saw the white-winged angels come
With singing to our lowly home
And kiss my darling as he slept.

They must have heard his little prayer,
For in the morn, with rapturous face,
He toddled to the chimney-place,
And found his little treasure there.

They came again one Christmas-tide, —
That angel host, so fair and white!
And singing all that glorious night,
They lured my darling from my side.

A little sock, a little toy,
A little lock of golden hair,
The Christmas music on the air,
A watching for my baby boy!

But if again that angel train
And golden-head come back for me,
To bear me to Eternity,
My watching will not be in vain!

Eugene Field.

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THE ANTIPODES: CHRISTMAS AT THE CAPE

YOUR Christmas comes with holly leaves
And snow about your doors and eaves;
Our lighted windows, open wide,
Let in our summer Christmas tide;
And where the drifting moths may go —
Behold our tiny flakes of snow;

But carol, carol in the cold;
And carol, carol as ye may, —
We sing the merry songs of old
As merrily on Christmas Day.

Your hills are wrapped in rainy cloud,
Your sea in anger roars aloud;
But here our hills are veiled with haze
In harmonies of blues and grays;
The waters of two oceans meet
With friendly murmurs by our feet;

But carol, carol, Christmas Waits,
And carol, carol, as ye may, —
The Crickets by our doors and gates
Sing in the grace of Christmas Day.

The rain and sunshine of the Cape
Lie folded in the ripening grape,
And Stellenbosch and Drakenstein,
With bounteous orchard, field of vine,
And every spot that we pass by —
Lie burnished 'neath our Christmas sky;

So carol, carol in your snow
And carol, carol as ye may, —
We carol 'mid our blooms ablow,
The grace of Summer's Christmas Day.

John Runcie.

CHRISTMAS IN INDIA

DIM dawn behind the tamarisks — the sky
is saffron-yellow —
As the women in the village grind the corn,
And the parrots seek the river-side, each calling
to his fellow
That the Day, the staring Eastern Day, is
born.

O the white dust on the highway!
O the stenches in the byway!
O the clammy fog that hovers over earth!
And at Home they 're making merry
'Neath the white and scarlet berry —
What part have India's exiles in their mirth?

Full day behind the tamarisks — the sky is blue and staring,
As the cattle crawl afield beneath the yoke,
And they bear One o'er the field-path who is past all hope or caring,
To that ghât below the curling wreaths of smoke.

Call on Rama, going slowly,
As ye bear a brother lowly —
Call on Rama — he may hear, perhaps, your voice!
With our hymn-books and our psalters
We appeal to other altars,
And to-day we bid "good Christian men rejoice!"

High noon behind the tamarisks — the sun is hot above us,
As at Home the Christmas Day is breaking wan.
They will drink our healths at dinner — those who tell us how they love us,
And forget us till another year be gone!

O the toil that knows no breaking!
O the *Heimweh*, ceaseless aching!
O the black dividing Sea and alien Plain!
Youth was cheap — wherefore we sold it;
Gold was good — we hoped to hold it;
And to-day we know the fulness of our gain.

Gray dusk behind the tamarisks — the parrots fly together —
As the sun is sinking slowly over Home;
And his last ray seems to mock us shackled in a lifelong tether
That drags us back howe'er so far we roam.

Hard her service, poor her payment —
She in ancient, tattered raiment —
India, she the grim Stepmother of our kind.
If a year of life be lent her,
If her temple's shrine we enter,
The door is shut — we may not look behind.

Black night behind the tamarisks — the owls begin their chorus —
As the conches from the temple scream and bray.
With the fruitless years behind us, and the hopeless years before us,
Let us honor, O my brothers, Christmas Day!

Call a truce, then, to our labors,
Let us feast with friends and neighbors;
And be merry as the custom of our caste;
For if "faint and forced the laughter,"
And if sadness follow after,
We are richer by one mocking Christmas past.

Rudyard Kipling.

CHRISTMAS AT SEA

THE sheets were frozen hard, and they cut the naked hand;
The decks were like a slide, where a seaman scarce could stand;
The wind was a nor'wester, blowing squally off the sea;
And cliffs and spouting breakers were the only things a-lee.

They heard the surf a-roaring before the break of day;
But 't was only with the peep of light we saw how ill we lay.
We tumbled every hand on deck instanter, with a shout,
And we gave her the maintops'l, and stood by to go about.

All day we tacked and tacked between the South
Head and the North;
All day we hauled the frozen sheets, and got no
further forth;
All day as cold as charity, in bitter pain and
dread,
For very life and nature we tacked from head to
head.

We gave the South a wider berth, for there the
tide-race roared;
But every tack we made we brought the North
Head close aboard;
So 's we saw cliffs and houses, and the breakers
running high,
And the coastguard in his garden, with his glass
against his eye.

The frost was on the village roofs as white as
ocean foam;
The good red fires were burning bright in every
'longshore home;
The windows sparkled clear, and the chimneys
volleyed out;
And I vow we sniffed the victuals as the vessel
went about.

The bells upon the church were rung with a mighty jovial cheer;
For it 's just that I should tell you how (of all days in the year)
This day of our adversity was blessèd Christmas morn,
And the house above the coastguard's was the house where I was born.

O well I saw the pleasant room, the pleasant faces there,
My mother's silver spectacles, my father's silver hair;
And well I saw the firelight, like a flight of homely elves,
Go dancing round the china-plates that stand upon the shelves.

And well I knew the talk they had, the talk that was of me,
Of the shadow on the household and the son that went to sea;
And O the wicked fool I seemed, in every kind of way,
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessèd Christmas Day.

They lit the high sea-light, and the dark began
to fall.
"All hands to loose topgallant sails," I heard
the captain call.
"By the Lord, she 'll never stand it," our first
mate, Jackson, cried.
. . . "It 's the one way or the other, Mr. Jack-
son," he replied.

She staggered to her bearings, but the sails were
new and good,
And the ship smelt up to windward just as though
she understood.
As the winter's day was ending, in the entry of the
night,
We cleared the weary headland, and passed below
the light.

And they heaved a mighty breath, every soul on
board but me,
As they saw her nose again pointing handsome
out to sea;
But all that I could think of, in the darkness and
the cold,
Was just that I was leaving home and my folks
were growing old.

Robert Louis Stevenson.

CHRISTMAS NIGHT OF '62

THE wintry blast goes wailing by,
The snow is falling overhead;
I hear the lonely sentry's tread,
And distant watch-fires light the sky.

Dim forms go flitting through the gloom;
The soldiers cluster round the blaze
To talk of other Christmas days,
And softly speak of home and home.

My sabre swinging overhead,
Gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,
While fiercely drives the blinding snow,
And memory leads me to the dead.

My thoughts go wandering to and fro,
Vibrating 'twixt the Now and Then;
I see the low-browed home agen,
The old hall wreathed with mistletoe.

And sweetly from the far-off years
Comes borne the laughter faint and low,
The voices of the Long Ago!
My eyes are wet with tender tears.

I feel agen the mother kiss,
  I see agen the glad surprise
  That lighted up the tranquil eyes
And brimmed them o'er with tears of bliss,

As, rushing from the old hall-door,
  She fondly clasped her wayward boy —
  Her face all radiant with the joy
She felt to see him home once more.

My sabre swinging on the bough
  Gleams in the watch-fire's fitful glow,
  While fiercely drives the blinding snow
Aslant upon my saddened brow.

Those cherished faces all are gone!
  Asleep within the quiet graves
  Where lies the snow in drifting waves, —
And I am sitting here alone.

There 's not a comrade here to-night
  But knows that loved ones far away
  On bended knees this night will pray:
"God bring our darling from the fight."

But there are none to wish me back,
  For me no yearning prayers arise.
  The lips are mute and closed the eyes —
My home is in the bivouac.

William G. McCabe.

In the Army of Northern Virginia.

CHRISTMAS DAY — 1868

HOW will it dawn, the coming Christmas Day?
A northern Christmas, such as painters love,
And kinsfolk, shaking hands but once a year,
And dames who tell old legends by the fire?
Red sun, blue sky, white snow, and pearlèd ice,
Keen, ringing air, which sets the blood on fire,
And makes the old man merry with the young,
Through the short sunshine, through the longer night?
Or southern Christmas, dark and dank with mist,
And heavy with the scent of steaming leaves,
And rosebuds mouldering on the dripping porch;
One twilight, without rise or set of sun,
Till beetles drone along the hollow lane,
And round the leafless hawthorns, flitting bats
Hawk the pale moths of winter? Welcome, then,
At best, the flying gleam, the flying shower,
The rain-pools glittering on the long white roads,
And shadows sweeping on from down to down
Before the salt Atlantic gale: yet come
In whatsoever garb, or gay or sad,
Come fair, come foul, 't will still be Christmas Day.

How will it dawn, the coming Christmas Day?
To sailors lounging on the lonely deck
Beneath the rushing trade-wind? Or to him
Who, by some noisome harbor of the East,
Watches swart arms roll down the precious bales,
Spoils of the tropic forests; year by year
Amid the din of heathen voices groaning,
Himself half heathen? How to those — brave hearts! —
Who toil with laden loins and sinking stride,
Beside the bitter wells of treeless sands
Toward the peaks which flood the ancient Nile,
To free a tyrant's captives? How to those —
New patriarchs of the new-found underworld —
Who stand, like Jacob, on the virgin lawns,
And count their flocks' increase? To them that day
Shall dawn in glory and solstitial blaze
Of full midsummer sun; to them that mourn,
Gay flowers beneath their feet, gay birds aloft,
Shall tell of naught but summer: but to them,
Ere yet, unwarned by carol or by chime,
They spring into the saddle, thrills may come
From that great heart of Christendom which beats
Round all the worlds; and gracious thoughts of youth;
Of steadfast folk, who worship God at home;

Of wise words, learnt beside their mothers' knee;
Of innocent faces upturned once again,
In awe and joy to listen to the tale
Of God made man, and in a manger laid:
May soften, purify, and raise the soul
From selfish cares, and growing lust of gain,
And phantoms of this dream which some call life,
Toward the eternal facts; for here or there,
Summer or winter, 't will be Christmas Day.

Blest day, which aye reminds us, year by year,
What 't is to be a man; to curb and spurn
The tyrant in us: that ignobler self
Which boasts, not loathes, its likeness to the brute,
And owns no good save ease, no ill save pain,
No purpose, save its share in that wild war
In which, through countless ages, living things
Compete in internecine greed. Ah, God!
Are we as creeping things, which have no Lord?
That we are brutes, great God, we know too well:
Apes, daintier-featured; silly birds who flaunt
Their plumes unheeding of the fowler's step;
Spiders, who catch with paper, not with webs;
Tigers, who slay with cannon and sharp steel,
Instead of teeth and claws — all these we are.
Are we no more than these, and born but to compete —

To envy and devour, like beast or herb;
Mere fools of nature; puppets of strong lusts,
Taking the sword, to perish with the sword
Upon the universal battlefield,
Even as the things upon the moor outside?

The heath eats up green grass and delicate flowers,
The pine eats up the heath, the grub the pine,
The finch the grub, the hawk the silly finch;
And man, the mightiest of all beasts of prey,
Eats what he lists: the strong eat up the weak,
The many eat the few; great nations, small;
And he who cometh in the name of all —
He, greediest, triumphs by the greed of all;
And, armed by his own victims, eats up all:
While ever out of the eternal heavens
Looks patient down the great, magnanimous God,
Who, Maker of all worlds, did sacrifice
All to Himself! Nay, but Himself to one:
Who taught mankind on that first Christmas Day
What 't was to be a man; to give, not take;
To serve, not rule; to nourish, not devour;
To help, not crush; if need, to die, not live.

Oh, blessed day, which giv'st the eternal lie
To self, and sense, and all the brute within;

Oh, come to us, amid this war of life;
To hall and hovel, come; to all who toil,
In senate, shop, or study; and to those
Who, sundered by the wastes of half a world,
Ill-warned, and sorely tempted, ever face
Nature's brute powers, and men unmanned to brutes.
Come to them, blest and blessing, Christmas Day.
Tell them once more the tale of Bethlehem;
The kneeling shepherds, and the Babe Divine:
And keep them men indeed, fair Christmas Day.

Charles Kingsley.

Christmas in Sacred Song

I can but think that angels sang,
When thou wast born, in the starry sky,
And that their golden harps out-rang
While the silver clouds went by!

Alfred Noyes.

OUT OF BOUNDS

A little Boy of heavenly birth,
But far from home to-day,
Comes down to find His ball, the Earth,
That Sin has cast away.
O comrades, let us one and all
Join in to get Him back His ball!

John B. Tabb.

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Christmas in Sacred Song

IN EXCELSIS GLORIA

WHEN Christ was born of Mary free
In Bethlehem in that fair citie,
Angels sungen with mirth and glee,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright
To them appearêd with great light,
And said, God's son is born this night,
In Excelsis Gloria!

This King is comen to save kind
[Even] in Scripture as we find,
[There] fore this song have we in mind,
In Excelsis Gloria!

[Then, dear] Lord, for Thy great grace
[Grant us] in bliss to see Thy face,
Where we may sing to Thee solace,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Harleian MS., A. D. 1500.

IN BETHLEHEM, THAT NOBLE PLACE

IN Bethlehem, that noble place,
As by prophecy said it was,
Of the Virgin Mary full of grace,
Salvator mundi natus est.
Be we merry in this feast,
In quo Salvator natus est.

On Christmas night an angel it told
To the shepherdes, keeping their fold,
That into Bethlehem with beasts wold
Salvator mundi natus est.
Be we merry in this feast,
In quo Salvator natus est.

The shepherdes were compassed right,
About them was a full great light;
Dread ye nought, said the angel bright,
Salvator mundi natus est.
Be we merry in this feast,
In quo Salvator natus est.

Behold, to you we bring great joy;
For why Jesus is born this day;
To us, of Mary, that mild May,
Salvator mundi natus est.

Be we merry in this feast,
In quo Salvator natus est.

And thus in faith find it ye shall,
Lying poorly in an oxes stall.
The shepherdes then God lauded all,
Quia Salvator mundi est.
Be we merry in this feast,
In quo Salvator natus est.

A. D. 1550.

THE NATIVITY

I SING the birth was born to-night,
The author both of life and light;
The angels so did sound it.
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light, and were afraid,
Yet searched, and true they found it.

The Son of God, th' Eternal King,
That did us all salvation bring,
And freed the soul from danger;
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Word, which heaven and earth did make,
Was now laid in a manger.

The Father's wisdom willed it so,
The Son's obedience knew no No,
  Both wills were in one stature;
And as that wisdom had decreed,
The Word was now made Flesh indeed,
  And took on him our nature.

What comfort by Him do we win,
Who made Himself the price of sin,
  To make us heirs of Glory!
To see this babe, all innocence,
A martyr born in our defence:
  Can man forget this story?

Ben Jonson.

SONNET ON THE NATIVITY

IMMENSITY, cloister'd in thy dear womb,
  Now leaves his well-beloved imprisonment;
There He hath made Himself to his intent,
Weak enough now into our world to come:
But oh! for thee, for Him, hath th' inn no room?
Yet lay Him in His stall, and from th' orient
Stars and wise men will travel, to prevent
Th' effect of Herod's jealous general doom.
See'st thou, my soul! with thy faith's eye, how He,
Which fills all place, yet none holds Him, doth lie!

Was not His pity towards thee wondrous high,
That would have need to be pitied by thee?
Kiss Him, and with Him into Egypt go,
With His kind mother who partakes thy woe.

John Donne.

OUT OF THE SHADOW

OUT of the Shadow of the Night
I come, led by the starshine bright,
With broken heart to bring to Thee
The fruit of Thine Epiphany,
The gift my fellows send by me,
The myrrh to bed Thine agony,
I set it here beneath Thy feet,
In token of Death's great defeat;
And hail Thee Conqueror in the strife,
And hail Thee Lord of Light and Life.
All hail! All hail the Virgin Son!
All hail! Thou little helpless One!
All hail! Thou King upon the Tree!
All hail! The Babe on Mary's Knee,
The centre of all mystery!

Michael Fairless.

CRADLE HYMN

AWAY in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus laid down His sweet head.
The stars in the bright sky looked down where He lay —
The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the Baby awakes,
But little Lord Jesus no crying He makes.
I love thee, Lord Jesus! Look down from the sky,
And stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Martin Luther.

THE SHEPHERDS

O THAN the fairest day, thrice fairer night!
Night to blest days in which a sun doth rise,
Of which that golden eye which clears the skies
Is but a sparkling ray, a shadow-light!
And blessed ye, in silly pastor's sight,
Mild creatures, in whose warm crib now lies

That heaven-sent Youngling, holy maid-born
Wight,
Midst, end, beginning of our prophecies!
Blest cottage that hath flowers in winter spread,
Though withered — blessed grass that hath
the grace
To deck and be a carpet to that place!
Thus sang, unto the sounds of oaten reed,
Before the Babe, the shepherds bowed on knees,
And springs ran nectar, honey dropped from
trees.

William Drummond, of Hawthornden.

ODE TO THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR

From "His Noble Numbers"

IN Numbers, and but these few,
I sing Thy birth, O Jesu!
Thou prettie Babie, born here,
With sup'rabundant scorn here:
Who for Thy Princely Port here,
Hadst for Thy place
Of Birth a base
Out-stable for Thy Court here.

Instead of neat Enclosures
Of interwoven Osiers;

Instead of fragrant Posies
Of Daffodils, and Rosies;
Thy cradle, Kingly Stranger,
As Gospel tells,
Was nothing els,
But, here, a homely manger.

But we with Silks (not Crewels),
With sundry precious Jewels,
And Lily-work will dresse Thee;
And as we dispossess Thee
Of clouts wee'l make a chamber,
Sweet Babe, for Thee,
Of Ivorie,
And plaister'd round with Amber.

The Jewes they did disdaine Thee,
But we will entertaine Thee
With Glories to await here
Upon Thy Princely State here,
And more for love, then pittie.
From yeere to yeere
Wee'l make Thee, here,
A Free-born of our Citie.

Robert Herrick.

CHRISTMAS DAY

SAVIOUR, whom this holy morn
Gave to our world below,
To mortal want and labor born,
And more than mortal woe;

Incarnate Word by every grief,
By each temptation tried,
Who lived to yield our ills relief,
And to redeem us, died!

If gayly clothed and proudly fed,
In dangerous wealth we dwell,
Remind us of thy manger bed
And lowly cottage cell!

If, prest by poverty severe,
In envious want we pine,
Oh, may the Spirit whisper near
How poor a lot was Thine!

Through fickle fortune's various scene
From sin preserve us free!
Like us Thou hast a mourner been, —
May we rejoice with Thee!

Reginald Heber.

WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED

WHILE shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind);
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
The Saviour, who is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign:

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find
To human view display'd,
All meanly wrapt in swathing-bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the seraph; and forthwith
Appear'd a shining throng
Of angels praising God, and thus
Address'd their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace;
Good-will henceforth from heaven to men
Begin, and never cease!"

Nahum Tate.

CRADLED 'MID THE OXEN

CRADLED 'mid the oxen
God Incarnate lies,
While His Virgin Mother
Soothes His infant cries.
Poor and mean the chamber,
Earth could scarce afford
E'en a roof to shelter
Its all-pitying Lord.

Round that tender Infant,
Radiant beams are spread,
For the holy angels
Guard His lowly bed.
While the wondering shepherds
Come with Eastern Kings,
Kneel before the cradle
Where the Mother sings.

Yes, the Lord who loves us,
  Here was humbly born,
Coming down to save us,
  As on Christmas morn.
Let us bow before Him,
  At the manger-throne,
There behold the Saviour,
  Men and angels own.

Henry Knight.

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

CHRISTMAS, prithee, be thou drest
  In thy best —
Snowy wimple, snowy gown —
    Laying down
Flooring pure and white, to greet
    Jesus' feet.
      Gloria in Excelsis.

Bid thy frosty handmaids bear
    Through the air
Cloth of silver for thy veil
    Clear and frail,
While the robins welcome sing
    To thy King.
      Gloria in Excelsis.

Angels o'er thy radiant brow
Leaning low,
Joyous, carol once again
Sweet refrain,
Seeing our dark earth so fair:
"*Peace be there,*
Gloria in Excelsis."

Lady Lindsay.

SHEPHERDS, REJOICE

"SHEPHERDS, rejoice, lift up your eyes.
And send your fears away;
News from the region of the skies!
Salvation 's born to-day.

"Jesus, the God whom Angels fear,
Comes down to dwell with you;
To-day He makes His entrance here,
But not as monarchs do.

"No gold, nor purple swaddling-bands,
Nor royal shining things;
A manger for His cradle stands,
And holds the King of kings.

"Go, shepherds, where the Infant lies,
And see His humble throne:
With tears of joy in all your eyes
Go, shepherds, kiss the Son."

Thus Gabriel sang; and straight around
The heavenly armies throng;
They tune their harps to lofty sound,
And thus conclude the song:

"Glory to God that reigns above,
Let peace surround the Earth;
Mortals shall know their Maker's love
At their Redeemer's birth."

Lord! and shall angels have their songs,
And men no tunes to raise?
O may we lose these useless tongues
When they forget to praise!

Glory to God that reigns above,
That pitied us, forlorn!
We join to sing our Maker's love —
For there 's a Saviour born!

Isaac Watts.

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM

O LITTLE town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee to-night.

For Christ is born of Mary,
And, gathered all above,
While mortals sleep, the angels keep
Their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars, together
Proclaim the holy birth!
And praises sing to God the King,
And peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem!
  Descend to us, we pray;
Cast out our sin, and enter in —
  Be born in us to-day.
We hear the Christmas angels
  The great glad tidings tell;
Oh, come to us, abide with us,
  Our Lord Emmanuel!

Phillips Brooks.

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THE LIGHT OF BETHLEHEM

'TIS Christmas Night! the snow,
  A flock unnumbered lies:
The old Judean stars aglow,
  Keep watch within the skies.

An icy stillness holds
  The pulses of the night:
A deeper mystery infolds
  The wondering Hosts of Light.

Till, lo, with reverence pale
  That dims each diadem,
The lordliest, earthward bending, hail
  The Light of Bethlehem!

John B. Tabb.

By permission of Small, Maynard & Company.

THIS HAPPY DAY

THIS happy day, whose risen sun
Shall set not through eternity,
This holy day when Christ the Lord,
Took on him our humanity,
For little children everywhere
A joyous season still we make,
We bring our precious gifts to them,
Even for the dear Jesus' sake.

Phœbe Cary.

THE VOICE OF THE CHRIST-CHILD

THE earth has grown old with its burden of care,
But at Christmas it always is young.
The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair,
And its soul full of music breaks forth on the air,
When the song of the Angels is sung.

It is coming, old earth, it is coming to-night;
On the snowflakes which cover thy sod,
The feet of the Christ-child fall gently and white,
And the voice of the Christ-child tells out with delight
That mankind are the children of God.

On the sad and the lonely, the wretched and poor,
That voice of the Christ-child shall fall;
And to every blind wanderer opens the door
Of a hope which he dared not to dream of before,
With a sunshine of welcome for all.

The feet of the humblest may walk in the field
Where the feet of the holiest have trod;
This, this is the marvel to mortals revealed,
When the silvery trumpets of Christmas have pealed,
That mankind are the children of God.

Phillips Brooks.

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IMMORTAL BABE, WHO THIS DEAR DAY

IMMORTAL Babe, who this dear day
Didst change Thine heaven for our clay,
And didst with flesh Thy godhead veil,
Eternal Son of God, all hail!

Shine, happy star; ye angels, sing
Glory on high to heaven's King:
Run, shepherds, leave your nightly watch!
See heaven come down to Bethlehem's cratch!

Worship, ye sages of the east,
The King of gods in meanness dressed!
O blessed maid, smile and adore
The God thy womb and arms have bore!

Star, angels, shepherds, and wise sages,
Thou virgin glory of the ages,
Restorèd frame of heaven and earth,
Joy in your dear Redeemer's birth!

Bishop Hall.

A ROCKING HYMN

SWEET baby, sleep! What ails my dear?
What ails my darling thus to cry?
Be still, my child, and lend thine ear
To hear me sing thy lullaby.
My pretty lamb, forbear to weep;
Be still, my dear; sweet baby, sleep!

When God with us was dwelling here,
In little babes He took delight;
Such innocents as thou, my dear,
Are ever precious in His sight.
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep!

A little Infant once was He,
And strength in weakness then was laid
Upon His virgin-mother's knee,
That power to thee might be conveyed.
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep!

In this thy frailty and thy need
He friends and helpers doth prepare,
Which thee shall cherish, clothe, and feed,
For of thy weal they tender are.
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep!
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

The King of kings, when He was born,
Had not so much for outward ease;
By Him such dressings were not worn,
Nor such like swaddling-clothes as these.
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep!
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

Within a manger lodged thy Lord,
Where oxen lay and asses fed;
Warm rooms we do to thee afford,
An easy cradle or a bed.
My baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep!

Thou hast, yet more, to perfect this,
A promise and an earnest got
Of gaining everlasting bliss,
Though thou, my babe, perceiv'st it not
Sweet baby, then, forbear to weep;
Be still, my babe; sweet baby, sleep.

George Wither.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS EVE

REJOICE in God alway,
With stars in Heaven rejoice,
Ere dawn of Christ's own day
Lift up each little voice.
Look up with glad, pure eye,
And count those lamps on high.
Nay, who may count them? On our gaze
They from their deeps come out in ever widening maze.

Each in his stand aloof
Prepares his keenest beam
Upon that hovel roof,
In at that door, to stream
Where meekly waits her time
The whole earth's Flower and Prime: —
Where in few hours the Eternal One
Will make a clear, new day, rising before the sun.

Rejoice in God alway,
With each green leaf rejoice,
Of berries on each spray
The brightest be your choice.
From bower and mountain lone
The autumnal hues are gone,
Yet gay shall be our Christmas wreath,
The glistening beads above, the burnish'd leaves beneath.

Rejoice in God alway,
With Powers rejoice on high,
Who now with glad array
Are gathering in the sky,
His cradle to attend,
And there all lowly bend.
But half so low as He hath bow'd
Did never highest Angel stoop from brightest cloud.

Rejoice in God alway,
All creatures, bird and beast;
Rejoice, again I say,
His mightiest and His least;
From ox and ass that wait
Here on His poor estate,
To the four living Powers, decreed
A thousand ways at once His awful car to speed.

Rejoice in God alway;
With Saints in Paradise
Your midnight service say,
For vigil glad arise.
Ev'n they in their calm bowers
Too tardy find the hours
Till He reveal the wondrous Birth:
How must we look and long, chain'd here to sin and earth!

Ye babes, to Jesus dear,
Rejoice in Him alway.
Ye whom He bade draw near,
O'er whom He loved to pray,
Wake, and lift up the head,
Each in his quiet bed.
Listen! His voice the night wind brings:
He in your cradle lies, He in our carol sings.

John Keble.

ODE ON THE MORNING OF CHRIST'S NATIVITY

THIS is the Month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heav'n's eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring;
For so the holy sages once did sing,
That he our deadly forfeit should release,
And with His Father work us a perpetual peace.

That glorious Form, that Light unsufferable,
And that far-beaming blaze of Majesty
Wherewith He, wont at Heaven's high council-table
To sit the midst of Trinal Unity,
He laid aside; and, here with us to be,
Forsook the courts of everlasting day,
And chose with us a darksome house of mortal clay.

Say, heavenly Muse, shall not thy sacred vein
Afford a present to the Infant God?
Hast thou no verse, no hymn, or solemn strain
To welcome Him to this His new abode
Now while the heaven, by the sun's team untrod,
Hath took no print of the approaching light,
And all the spangled host keep watch in squadrons bright?

See how from far, upon the eastern road,
The startled wizards haste with odors sweet:
O run, prevent them with thy humble ode
And lay it lowly at His blessed feet;
Have thou the honor first thy Lord to greet,
And join thy voice unto the Angel quire
From out His secret altar touched with hallow'd fire.

The Hymn

I

IT was the winter wild,
While the heaven-born child,
All meanly wrapt, in the crude manger lies;
Nature in awe to Him
Had doff'd her gaudy trim,
With her great Master so to sympathize;
It was no season then for her
To wanton with the sun, her lusty paramour.

II

Only with speeches fair
She wooes the gentle air,
To hide her guilty front with innocent snow,
And on her naked shame,
Pollute with sinful blame,
The saintly veil of maiden white to throw;

Confounded that her Maker's eyes
Should look so near upon her foul deformities.

III

But He, her fears to cease,
Sent down the meek-eyed Peace;
She, crowned with olive green, came softly sliding
Down through the turning sphere,
His ready harbinger,
With turtle wing the amorous clouds dividing;
And waving wide her myrtle wand,
She strikes a universal peace through sea and land.

IV

No war, or battle's sound,
Was heard the world around:
The idle spear and shield were high uphung,
The hooked chariot stood
Unstained with hostile blood,
The trumpet spake not to the armed throng,
And kings sat still, with awful eye,
As if they surely knew their sovereign Lord was by.

V

But peaceful was the night
Wherein the Prince of light
His reign of peace upon the earth began:

The winds, with wonder whist,
Smoothly the waters kist,
Whispering new joys to the mild ocean,
Who now hath quite forgot to rave,
While birds of calm sit brooding on the charmed wave.

VI

The stars, with deep amaze,
Stand fixed in steadfast gaze,
Bending one way their precious influence,
And will not take their flight,
For all the morning light,
Or Lucifer, that often warned them thence;
But in their glimmering orbs did glow
Until their Lord Himself bespake, and bade them go.

VII

And though the shady gloom
Had given day her room,
The sun himself withheld his wonted speed,
And hid his head for shame,
As his inferior flame
The new enlightened world no more should need;
He saw a greater sun appear
Than his bright throne or burning axletree could bear.

VIII

The shepherds on the lawn,
Or e'er the point of dawn,
  Sat simply chatting in a rustic row;
Full little thought they then
That the mighty Pan
  Was kindly come to live with them below;
Perhaps their loves, or else their sheep,
Was all that did their silly thoughts so busy keep.

IX

When such music sweet
Their hearts and ears did greet,
  As never by mortal finger strook,
Divinely-warbled voice
Answering the stringed noise,
  As all their souls in blissful rapture took:
The air, such pleasure loath to lose,
With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close.

X

Nature, that heard such sound,
Beneath the hollow round
  Of Cynthia's seat, the airy region thrilling,
Now was almost won

To think her part was done,
And that her reign had here its last fulfilling.
She knew such harmony alone
Could hold all heaven and earth in happier union.

XI

At last surrounds their sight
A globe of circular light,
That with long beams the shamefaced night arrayed;
The helmed Cherubim,
And sworded Seraphim,
Are seen in glittering ranks, with wings displayed,
Harping in loud and solemn quire,
With unexpressive notes, to Heaven's newborn Heir.

XII

Such music (as 't is said —)
Before was never made,
But when of old the sons of morning sung,
While the Creator great
His constellations set,
And the well-balanced world on hinges hung,
And cast the dark foundations deep,
And bid the weltering waves their cosey channel keep.

XIII

Ring out, ye crystal spheres,
Once bless our human ears,
  If ye have power to touch our senses so;
And let your silver chime
Move in melodious time,
  And let the base of heaven's deep organ blow;
And with your ninefold harmony
Make up full consort to the angelic symphony.

XIV

For if such holy song
Inwrap our fancy long,
  Time will run back, and fetch the age of gold;
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
  And leprous Sin will melt from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering
    day.

XV

Yea, Truth and Justice then
Will down return to men,
  Orbed in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,

With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

XVI

But wisest Fate says, No,
This must not yet be so;
The Babe yet lies in smiling infancy,
That on the bitter Cross
Must redeem our loss,
So both Himself and us to glorify;
Yet first to those ychained in sleep
The wakeful trump of doom must thunder through the deep.

XVII

With such a horrid clang
As on Mount Sinai rang,
While the red fire and smouldering clouds outbrake,
The aged earth, aghast
With terror of that blast,
Shall from the surface to the centre shake
When, at the world's last session,
The dreadful Judge in middle air shall spread His throne.

XVIII

And then, at last, our bliss
Full and perfect is,
  But now begins; for, from this happy day,
The old Dragon under ground,
In straiter limits bound,
  Not half so far casts his usurped sway;
And, wroth to see his kingdom fail,
Swinges the scaly horror of his folded tail.

XIX

The oracles are dumb;
No voice or hideous hum
  Runs through the arched roof in words deceiving.
Apollo, from his shrine,
Can no more divine —
  With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos leaving.
No nightly trance or breathed spell
Inspires the pale-eyed priest from the prophetic cell.

XX

The lonely mountains o'er,
And the resounding shore,
  A voice of weeping heard, and loud lament;

From haunted spring and dale,
Edged with poplar pale,
The parting Genius is with sighing sent;
With flower-inwoven tresses torn,
The Nymphs in twilight shade of tangled thickets mourn.

XXI

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Lars and Lemures moan with midnight plaint;
In urns and altars round,
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flamens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat,
While each peculiar Power foregoes his wonted seat.

XXII

Peor and Baalim
Forsake their temples dim,
With that twice-battered god of Palestine;
And mooned Ashtaroth,
Heaven's queen and mother both,
Now sits not girt with tapers' holy shine;
The Lybic Hammon shrinks his horn;
In vain the Tyrian maids their wounded Thammuz mourn.

XXIII

And sullen Moloch, fled,
Hath left in shadows dread
His burning idol, all of blackest hue;
In vain with cymbals' ring
They call the grisly king,
In dismal dance about the furnace blue:
The brutish gods of Nile as fast,
Isis and Orus, and the dog Anubis, haste.

XXIV

Nor is Osiris seen
In Memphian grove or green,
Trampling the unshowered grass with lowing loud;
Nor can he be at rest
Within his sacred chest;
Nought but profoundest hell can be his shroud;
In vain with timbrelled anthems dark
The sable-stoled sorcerers bear his worshipped ark.

XXV

He feels from Judah's land
The dreaded Infant's hand;
The rays of Bethlehem blind his dusky eyn;
Nor all the gods beside
Longer dare abide;
Not Typhon huge ending in snaky twine:

Our Babe, to show His Godhead true,
Can in His swaddling bands control the damned crew.

XXVI

So when the sun, in bed,
Curtained with cloudy red,
Pillows his chin upon an orient wave,
The flocking shadows pale
Troop to the infernal jail,
Each fettered ghost slips to his several grave;
And the yellow-skirted Fayes
Fly after the night-steeds, leaving their moon-loved maze.

XXVII

But, see, the Virgin blest
Hath laid her Babe to rest;
Time is our tedious song should here have ending;
Heaven's youngest-teemed star
Hath fixed her polished car,
Her sleeping Lord with handmaid lamp attending;
And all about the courtly stable
Bright-harnessed angels sit in order serviceable.

John Milton.

THE GLORIOUS SONG

IT came upon the midnight clear,
  The glorious song of old,
From angels bending near the earth,
  To touch their harps of gold:
"Peace on earth, good-will to men
  From heaven's all-gracious King."
The world in solemn stillness lay
  To hear the angels sing.

Still through the cloven skies they came,
  With peaceful wings unfurled;
And still their heavenly music floats
  O'er all the weary world:
Above its sad and lowly plains
  They bend on hovering wing,
And ever o'er its Babel sounds
  The blessed angels sing.

But with the woes of sin and strife
  The world has suffered long;
Beneath the angel-strain have rolled
  Two thousand years of wrong;
And man, at war with man, hears not
  The love song which they bring;
Oh, hush the noise, ye men of strife,
  And hear the angels sing.

And ye, beneath life's crushing load,
Whose forms are bending low,
Who toil along the climbing way
With painful steps and slow,
Look now, for glad and golden hours
Come swiftly on the wing:
Oh, rest beside the weary road,
And hear the angels sing.

For lo, the days are hastening on
By prophet bards foretold,
When with the ever circling years
Comes round the age of gold:
When Peace shall over all the earth
Its ancient splendors fling,
And the whole world give back the song
Which now the angels sing.

Edmund Hamilton Sears.

HYMN OF GLADNESS

ABOVE our heads, from out the clear, deep sky.
The stars look down
As when of old their mellow radiance shone
O'er Bethlehem's town.

The midnight bells peal out with solemn tone
From every tower,
Bidding the world with gladness to await
The promised hour.

O lonely heart! look up with faith renewed;
Thy Lord is here;
For now the anthem of the heavenly host
Breaks on the ear.

Emmanuel, Redeemer, once again
Comes to earth,
To change its darkness by the glorious light
That hails His birth.

Not now to Israel's race alone He comes
With love divine;
To all the King of Glory shall descend,
God's promised sign.

Lift up each voice to greet the op'ning morn
Of this glad day;
The angels sing, and men with them rejoice,
And gladly say:

"Glory to God, whose promise is fulfilled!
To man be peace!
For Christ our Lord begins His holy reign,
To never cease."

Thomas Mair.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS

HARK! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ, the everlasting Lord,
Late in time behold Him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King!

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to appear,
Jesus our Immanuel here.
Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Son of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Risen with healing in His wings.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King!

Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die;

Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Come, Desire of nations, come,
Fix in us Thy humble home;
Rise, the woman's conquering Seed,
Bruise in us the serpent's head.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King!

Adam's likeness now efface,
Stamp Thine image in its place;
Second Adam from above,
Reinstate us in Thy love.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the new-born King!
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King!

Charles Wesley.

CHRISTIANS, AWAKE!

CHRISTIANS, awake! Salute the happy morn
Whereon the Saviour of mankind was born;
Rise to adore the mystery of love,
Which hosts of angels chanted from above;

With them the joyful tidings first begun
Of God incarnate and the Virgin's Son.
Then to the watchful shepherds it was told,
Who heard the angelic herald's voice: "Behold,
I bring good tidings of a Saviour's birth
To you and all the nations upon earth;
This day hath God fulfilled His promised word,
This day is born a Saviour, Christ the Lord."

He spake; and straightway the celestial choir
In hymns of joy, unknown before, conspire;
The praises of redeeming love they sang,
And heaven's whole orb with alleluias rang;
God's highest glory was their anthem still:
Peace upon earth and unto men good-will.

To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds ran,
To see the wonders God had wrought for man;
Then to their flocks, still praising God, return,
And their glad hearts with holy rapture burn;
Amazed, the wondrous tidings they proclaim,
The first apostles of His infant fame.

Oh, may we keep and ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind;
Trace we the Babe, who hath retrieved our loss,
From the poor manger to the bitter cross;

Tread in His steps, assisted by His grace,
Till man's first heavenly state again takes place.

Then may we hope, the angelic hosts among,
To join, redeemed, a glad, triumphant throng:
He that was born upon this joyful day
Around us all His glory shall display;
Saved by His love, incessant we shall sing
Eternal praise to heaven's almighty King.

John Byrom.

HAPPY NIGHT AND HAPPY SILENCE

HAPPY night and happy silence downward softly stealing,
Softly stealing over land and sea,
Stars from golden censers swing a silent eager feeling,
Down on Judah, down on Galilee;
And all the wistful air, the earth and sky,
Listened, listened for the gladness of a cry.

Holy night, a sudden flash of light its way is winging:
Angels, angels, all above, around;
Hark, the angel voices, hark, the angel voices singing,
And the sheep are lying on the ground.

Lo! all the wistful air and earth and sky
Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Happy night at Bethlehem; soft little hands are feeling,
Feeling in the manger with the kine:
Little hands, and eyelids closed in sleep, while angels kneeling,
Mary mother, hymn the Babe Divine.
Lo! all the wistful air and earth and sky
Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Wide, as if the light were music, flashes adoration:
"Glory be to God, nor ever cease."
All the silence thrills, and speeds the message of salvation:
"Peace on earth, good-will to men of peace."
Lo! all the wistful air and earth and sky
Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Holy night, thy solemn silence evermore enfoldeth
Angel songs and peace from God on high:
Holy night, thy watcher still with faithful eye beholdeth
Wings that wave, and angel glory nigh.
Lo! hushed is strife in air and earth and sky,
Still thy watchers hear the gladness of the cry.

Praise Him, ye who watch the night, the silent
night of ages:
Praise Him, shepherds, praise the Holy Child;
Praise Him, ye who hear the light, O praise Him,
all ye sages;
Praise Him, children, praise Him, meek and
mild.
Lo! peace on earth, glory to God on high —
Listen, listen to the gladness of the cry.

Edward Thring.

THE BIRTH AT BETHLEHEM

WHEN Jordan hushed his waters still,
And silence slept on Zion's Hill;
When Bethlehem's shepherds thro' the night
Watched o'er their flocks by starry light:

Hark! from the midnight hills around,
A voice of more than mortal sound
In distant hallelujahs stole,
Wild murmurings o'er the raptured soul.

On wheels of light, on wings of flame,
The glorious hosts of Zion came;
High heaven with songs of triumph rung,
While thus they struck their harps, and sung:

"O Zion, lift thy raptured eye,
The long-expected hour is nigh;
Renewed, creation smiles again,
The Prince of Salem comes to reign.

"He comes to cheer the trembling heart,
Bid Satan and his host depart;
Again the Daystar gilds the gloom,
Again the bowers of Eden bloom."

Thomas Campbell.

HARK, THE GLAD SOUND!

HARK, the glad sound! the Saviour comes,
The Saviour promised long;
Let every heart prepare a throne,
And every voice a song!

He comes, the prisoners to release
In Satan's bondage held;
The gates of brass before Him burst,
The iron fetters yield.

He comes, the broken heart to bind,
The bleeding soul to cure,
And with the treasures of His grace
T' enrich the humble poor.

Our glad Hosannas, Prince of Peace,
  Thy welcome shall proclaim,
And heaven's eternal arches ring
  With Thy belovèd name.

Philip Doddridge.

CRADLE SONG

HUSH! my dear, lie still and slumber,
  Holy Angels guard thy bed!
Heavenly blessings without number
  Gently falling on thy head.

Sleep, my babe; thy food and raiment,
  House and home, thy friends provide;
All without thy care or payment,
  All thy wants are well supplied.

How much better thou 'rt attended
  Than the Son of God could be,
When from heaven He descended,
  And became a child like thee!

Soft and easy is thy cradle;
  Coarse and hard thy Saviour lay;
When His birthplace was a stable,
  And His softest bed was hay.

See the kinder shepherds round Him,
  Telling wonders from the sky!
Where they sought Him, there they found Him,
  With His Virgin-Mother by.

See the lovely Babe a-dressing;
  Lovely Infant, how He smiled!
When He wept, the Mother's blessing
  Soothed and hush'd the holy Child.

Lo, He slumbers in His manger,
  Where the hornèd oxen fed:
Peace, my darling, here 's no danger;
  Here 's no ox a-near thy bed!

May'st thou live to know and fear Him,
  Trust and love Him all thy days;
Then go dwell for ever near Him,
  See His face, and sing His praise!

I could give thee thousand kisses,
  Hoping what I most desire;
Not a mother's fondest wishes
  Can to greater joys aspire.

Isaac Watts.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

WHEN marshall'd on the nightly plain,
The glittering host bestud the sky;
One Star alone, of all the train,
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.
Hark! hark! to God the chorus breaks,
From every host, from every gem;
But one alone the Saviour speaks,
It is the Star of Bethlehem.

Once on the raging seas I rode,
The storm was loud — the night was dark,
The ocean yawn'd — and rudely blow'd
The wind that toss'd my foundering bark.
Deep horror then my vitals froze,
Death-struck, I ceased the tide to stem;
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.

It was my guide, my light, my all;
It bade my dark forebodings cease,
And through the storm and danger's thrall
It led me to the port of peace.
Now, safely moor'd — my perils o'er —
I 'll sing, first in night's diadem,

For ever, and for evermore,
The Star! — The Star of Bethlehem!

Henry Kirke White.

THE BURNING BABE

AS I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow,
Surprised I was with sudden heat which made my heart to glow;
And lifting up a fearful eye to view what fire was near,
A pretty Babe, all burning bright, did in the air appear,
Who, scorchèd with exceeding heat, such floods of tears did shed,
As though His floods should quench His flames with what His tears were fed.
"Alas," quoth He, "but newly born in fiery heats to fry,
Yet none approach to warm their hearts or feel my fire but I.
My faultless breast the furnace is, the fuel wounding thorns,
Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns;

The fuel Justice layeth on, and Mercy blows the coals;
The metal in this furnace wrought are men's defilèd souls;
For which, as now on fire I am, to work them to their good,
So will I melt into a bath, to wash them in my blood."

With this He vanished out of sight, and swiftly shrank away,
And straight I callèd unto mind that it was Christmas Day.

Robert Southwell.

CALM ON THE LISTENING EAR OF NIGHT

CALM on the listening ear of night
Come heaven's melodious strains,
Where wild Judea stretches far
Her silver-mantled plains;
Celestial choirs from courts above
Shed sacred glories there,
And angels, with their sparkling lyres,
Make music on the air.

The answering hills of Palestine
  Send back the glad reply,
And greet from all their holy heights
  The day-spring from on high:
O'er the blue depths of Galilee
  There comes a holier calm,
And Sharon waves in solemn praise
  Her silent groves of palm.

Glory to God! the lofty strain
  The realm of ether fills;
How sweeps the song of solemn joy
  O'er Judah's sacred hills!
"Glory to God!" the sounding skies
  Loud with their anthems ring:
"Peace on earth, good-will to men,
  From heaven's eternal King."

Light on thy hills, Jerusalem!
  The Saviour now is born:
More bright on Bethlehem's joyous plains
  Breaks the first Christmas morn;
And brighter on Moriah's brow,
  Crowned with her temple spires,
Which first proclaim the new-born light,
  Clothed with its orient fires.

This day shall Christian tongues be mute,
  And Christian hearts be cold?

O catch the anthem that from heaven
  O'er Judah's mountains rolled!
When nightly burst from seraph harps
  The high and solemn lay —
"Glory to God, on earth be peace;
  Salvation comes to-day!"

Edmund Hamilton Sears.

THE CALM AND SILENT NIGHT

I

IT was in the calm and silent night! —
  Seven hundred years and fifty-thre
Had Rome been growing up to might,
  And now was queen of land and sea!
No sound was heard of clashing wars,
  Peace brooded o'er the hushed domain;
Apollo, Pallas, Jove, and Mars,
  Held undisturbed their ancient reign,
    In the solemn midnight,
      Centuries ago!

II

'T was in the calm and silent night!
  The senator of haughty Rome
Impatient urged his chariot's flight,
  From lordly revel rolling home.

Triumphal arches gleaming swell
His breast with thoughts of boundless sway;
What recked the ROMAN what befell
A paltry province far away,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

III

Within that province far away
Went plodding home a weary boor;
A streak of light before him lay,
Fall'n through a half-shut stable door
Across his path. He passed — for naught
Told him what was going on within.
How keen the stars! his only thought;
The air, how calm and cold and thin,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

IV

O strange indifference! — low and high
Drowsed over common joys and cares:
The earth was still — but knew not why;
The world was listening! — unawares!
How calm a moment may precede
One that shall thrill the world for ever!

To that still moment none would heed;
Man's doom was linked no more to sever,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

v

It *is* the calm and solemn night!
A thousand bells ring out, and throw
Their joyous peals abroad, and smite
The darkness, charmed and holy *now!*
The night that erst no name had worn,
To it a happy name is given;
For in that stable lay, new-born,
The peaceful Prince of Earth and Heaven,
In the solemn midnight,
Centuries ago!

Alfred Domett.

CAROL, CAROL, TENDERLY

CAROL, carol, tenderly and sweetly,
Over the mountain, over the wold;
Let the jubilant message fleetly
Now in castle and cot be told:
Christ the Lord is born, and He
Dons our poor humanity.

Hark! the tidings of Christmas ringing
East and west, and from land to land;
While we villager lads go singing,
Under the starlight, hand in hand:
Christ the Lord is born, and He
Dons our poor humanity.

Angels sang of the coming glory
Years ago, in far Bethlehem;
Kings and shepherds retold the story —
We would echo it back to them:
Christ the Lord is born, and He
Dons our poor humanity.

Lady Lindsay.

HAPPY SHEPHERDS

HAPPY shepherds, pipe and trill!
So your earth-tuned melody
Join the angels' harmony,
Far beyond yon snow-bound hill.

(*Praise to God and peace on earth:*
Christ is come of mortal birth.)

Happy shepherds, kneel and pray!
First to you the message given,
First for you the song from heaven,
On that blessed Christmas Day.

(Praise to God and peace on earth:
Christ is come of mortal birth.)

Set in silver, as a gem,
Gleams among the stars yon star;
Ride the wise kings from afar
Toward the Babe in Bethlehem.

(Praise to God and peace on earth:
Christ is come of mortal birth.)

In a manger's grassy bed
He, the Lord of Life and Time,
Lord of each wide world and clime,
Meekly chose to lay His head.

(Praise to God and peace on earth:
Christ is come of mortal birth.)

Lady Lindsay.

CHRIST'S NATIVITY

AWAKE, glad heart! get up and sing!
It is the Birthday of thy King.
Awake! awake!
The sun doth shake
Light from his locks, and, all the way
Breathing perfumes, doth spice the day.

Awake! awake! hark how th' wood rings,
Winds whisper, and the busy springs
A concert make!
Awake! awake!
Man is their high-priest, and should rise
To offer up the sacrifice.

I would I were a bird or star,
Fluttering in woods, or lifted far
Above this inn
And road of sin!
Then either bird or star should be
Shining or singing still to Thee.

I would I had in my best part
Fit rooms for Thee! or that my heart
Were so clean as
Thy manger was!
But I am all filth, and obscene:
Yet if Thou wilt, Thou canst make clean.

Sweet Jesu! will then. Let no more
This leper haunt and soil Thy door!
Cure him, ease him,
O release him!
And let once more, by mystic birth,
The Lord of life be born in earth.

Henry Vaughan.

WHO CAN FORGET?

WHO can forget — never to be forgot —
The time, that all the world in slumber lies,
When, like the stars, the singing angels shot
To earth, and heaven awakèd all his eyes
To see another sun at midnight rise
On earth? Was never sight of pareil fame,
For God before man like Himself did frame,
But God Himself now like a mortal man became.

A Child He was, and had not learnt to speak,
That with His word the world before did make;
His mother's arms Him bore, He was so weak,
That with one hand the vaults of heaven could shake;
See how small room my infant Lord doth take,
Whom all the world is not enough to hold!
Who of His years or of His age hath told?
Never such age so young, never a child so old.

And yet but newly He was infanted,
And yet already He was sought to die;
Yet scarcely born, already banished;
Not able yet to go, and forced to fly;
But scarcely fled away, when, by and by,

The tyrant's sword with blood is all defiled,
And Rachel, for her sons with fury wild,
Cries, "O thou cruel king, and O my sweetest child!"

Egypt His nurse became, where Nilus springs,
Who, straight to entertain the rising sun,
The hasty harvest in his bosom brings;
But now for drought the fields were all undone,
And now with waters all is overrun;
So fast the Cynthian mountains pour'd their snow,
When once they felt the sun so near them glow,
That Nilus Egypt lost, and to a sea did grow.

The angels carolled loud their song of peace,
The cursèd oracles were stricken dumb;
To see their Shepherd the poor shepherds press;
To see their King the kingly sophies come;
And them to guide unto his Master's home,
A star comes dancing up the orient,
That springs for joy over the strawy tent,
Where gold, to make their Prince a crown, they all present.

Giles Fletcher.

THE ANGEL'S STORY

THROUGH the blue and frosty heavens
Christmas stars were shining bright;
Glistening lamps throughout the City
Almost matched their gleaming light;
While the winter snow was lying,
And the winter winds were sighing,
Long ago, one Christmas night.

While from every tower and steeple
Pealing bells were sounding clear
(Never with such tones of gladness
Save when Christmas time is near),
Many a one that night was merry
Who had toiled through all the year.

That night saw old wrongs forgiven,
Friends, long parted, reconciled;
Voices all unused to laughter,
Mournful eyes that rarely smiled,
Trembling hearts that feared the morrow,
From their anxious thoughts beguiled.

Rich and poor felt love and blessing
From the gracious season fall;

Joy and plenty in the cottage,
  Peace and feasting in the hall;
And the voices of the children
  Ringing clear above it all!

Adelaide A. Procter.

THEY LEAVE THE LAND OF GEMS

THEY leave the land of gems and gold,
  The shining portals of the East;
For Him, the woman's Seed foretold,
  They leave the revel and the feast.

To earth their sceptres they have cast,
  And crowns by kings ancestral worn;
They track the lonely Syrian waste;
  They kneel before the Babe new born.

O happy eyes that saw Him first!
  O happy lips that kissed His feet!
Earth slakes at last her ancient thirst,
  With Eden's joy her pulses beat.

True kings are those who thus forsake
  Their kingdoms for the Eternal King;
Serpent, her foot is on thy neck;
  Herod, thou writhest, but canst not sting.

He, He is King, and He alone,
  Who lifts that infant hand to bless;
Who makes His mother's knee His throne,
  Yet rules the starry wilderness.

Aubrey de Vere.

NEW PRINCE, NEW POMP

BEHOLD a silly [1] tender Babe,
  In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies;
  Alas! a piteous sight:

The inns are full, no man will yield
  This little Pilgrim bed;
But forced He is with silly beasts,
  In crib to shrowd His head.

Despise Him not for lying there,
  First what He is inquire:
An orient pearl is often found
  In depth of dirty mire.

Weigh not His crib, His wooden dish,
  Nor beasts that by Him feed;
Weigh not His mother's poor attire,
  Nor Joseph's simple weed.

[1] *Simple.*

This stable is a Prince's court,
The crib His chair of State:
The beasts are parcel of His pomp,
The wooden dish His plate.

The persons in that poor attire,
His royal liveries wear,
The Prince himself is come from Heaven,
This pomp is prizèd there.

With joy approach, O Christian wight,
Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise His humble pomp,
Which He from Heaven doth bring.

Robert Southwell.

THE SHEPHERDS HAD AN ANGEL

THE Shepherds had an Angel,
The Wise Men had a star,
But what have I, a little child,
To guide me home from far,
Where glad stars sing together,
And singing Angels are?

Lord Jesus is my Guardian,
So I can nothing lack:
The lambs lie in His bosom
Along life's dangerous track:

The wilful lambs that go astray
  He bleeding fetches back.

Lord Jesus is my guiding star,
  My beacon light in heaven:
He leads me step by step along
  The path of life uneven:
He, true light, leads me to that land
  Whose day shall be as seven.

Those Shepherds through the lonely night
  Sat watching by their sheep,
Until they saw the heavenly host,
  Who neither tire nor sleep,
All singing "Glory, glory,"
  In festival they keep.

Christ watches me, His little lamb;
  Cares for me day and night,
That I may be His own in heaven:
  So angels, clad in white,
Shall sing their "Glory, glory"
  For my sake in the height.

The Wise Men left their country
  To journey morn by morn,
With gold and frankincense and myrrh,
  Because the Lord was born:
God sent a star to guide them
  And sent a dream to warn.

My life is like their journey,
  Their star is like God's book;
I must be like those good Wise Men
  With heavenward heart and look:
But shall I give no gifts to God?
  What precious gifts they took!

Lord, I will give my love to Thee,
  Than gold much costlier,
Sweeter to Thee than frankincense,
  More prized than choicest myrrh;
Lord, make me dearer day by day,
  Day by day holier;

Nearer and dearer day by day,
  Till I my voice unite,
And sing my "Glory, glory"
  With angels clad in white;
All "Glory, glory" given to Thee
  Through all the heavenly height.

Christina G. Rossetti.

AT CHRISTMAS

[1] Written in South Africa

STREW our green earth — flowers! Our blue skies — incense
  Mount in wreath and spray!
Set the Figures Three within the Rock-Cave
  All a Christmas Day!

And it 's O to dream of Essex gables under snow
clouds gray —
And it 's Ah to wake and know them years and
years away!

Dark babe-burthened mothers, hail the Mother,
Fair as England's May!
Let us back again to where we once clung
On a Christmas Day!
And it 's O to dream those same mothers on whose
breasts we lay —
And it 's Ah to wake and know them half the
earth away!

Small brown goatherds, dance and sing to Jesus
On His bed of hay!
You to-day He heeds, as once He heeded
Me on Christmas Day!
And it 's O to dream of things we once saw, ere
we said God "Nay!"
And it 's Ah to wake and know them half a life
away!

Poor-men brothers, up and hie to Joseph —
By the Crib to pray!
Gentler hearts and sterner wills we 'll ask for
On our Christmas Day!

And it 's O to guess what man I might be, would
I but obey!
Is it I that heed at last the Bidding? Wend at
last the Way?

Arthur Shearly Cripps.

HOLY CHRISTMAS

ALL after pleasures as I rid one day,
My horse and I both tired, body and mind,
With full cry of affections quite astray,
I took up in the next inn I could find.

There, when I came, Whom found I but my dear,
My dearest Lord; expecting till the grief
Of pleasures brought me to Him; ready there
To be of all passengers' most sweet relief?

O Thou, Whose glorious, yet contracted, light,
Wrapt in Night's mantle, stole into a manger;
Since my dark soul and brutish — is Thy right,
To Man, of all beasts, be not Thou a stranger:

Furnish and deck my soul, that Thou may'st have
A better lodging than a rack or grave.

The shepherds sing; and shall I silent be?
My God, no hymn for Thee?
My soul 's a shepherd too: a flock it feeds
Of thoughts and words and deeds.
The pasture is Thy word, the streams Thy grace,
Enriching every place.

Shepherds and flock shall sing, and all my powers
Ousting the daylight hours.

Then we will chide the sun for letting night
Take up his place and right:
We sing one common Lord; wherefore he should
Himself the candle hold.

I will go searching till I find a sun
Shall stay till we have done;
A willing shiner, that shall shine as gladly
As frost-nipt suns look sadly.
Then we will sing and shine all our own day,
And one another pay.

His beams shall cheer my breast, and both so twine,
Till ev'n His beams sing and my music shine.

George Herbert.

Christmas Carols

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS CAROL

Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.

Chorus

Glory to God in the highest, and on
earth peace, goodwill toward men.

St. Luke's Gospel.

Christmas Carols

ANGLO-NORMAN CAROL

LORDINGS, listen to our lay —
We have come from far away
To seek Christmas;
In this mansion we are told
He his yearly feast doth hold:
'T is to-day!
May joy come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love!

Lordings, I now tell you true,
Christmas bringeth unto you
Only mirth;
His house he fills with many a dish
Of bread and meat and also fish,
To grace the day.
May joy come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love!

Lordings, through our army's band
They say — who spends with open hand
Free and fast,

And oft regales his many friends —
God gives him double what he spends,
To grace the day.
May joy come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love!

Lordings, wicked men eschew,
In them never shall you view
Aught that 's good;
Cowards are the rabble rout,
Kick and beat the grumblers out,
To grace the day.
May joys come from God above,
To all those who Christmas love!

Lords, by Christmas and the host
Of this mansion hear my toast —
Drink it well —
Each must drain his cup of wine,
And I the first will toss off mine:
Thus I advise,
Here then I bid you all *Wassail,*
Cursed be he who will not say *Drinkhail.*

Earliest Existing Carol in English, Thirteenth Century.

THE FIRST NOEL

THE first Noel the angel did say,
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a Star,
Shining in the East, beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so it continued both day and night.

And by the light of that same Star,
Three Wisemen came from country far;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the Star wherever it went.

This Star drew nigh to the north-west,
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.

Then entered in those Wisemen three,
Full reverently upon their knee,
And offered there, in His Presence,
Their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.

Then let us all with one accord,
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That hath made heaven and earth of nought,
And with His Blood mankind hath bought.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.

Old English.

A FIFTEENTH-CENTURY CAROL

I SING of a maiden
That is makeles [1];
King of all kings
To her son she ches.[2]

He came al so still
There his mother was,
As dew in April
That falleth on the grass.

He came al so still
To his mother's bour,
As dew in April
That falleth on the flour.

[1] *Matchless.* [2] *Chose.*

He came al so still
  There his mother lay,
As dew in April,
  That falleth on the spray.

Mother and maiden
  Was never none but she;
Well may such a lady
  Goddes mother be.

Anonymous.

GOD REST YOU MERRY, GENTLEMEN

GOD rest you merry, gentlemen,
  Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
  Was born upon this day
To save us all from Satan's power
  When we were gone astray.
    O tidings of comfort and joy,
    For Jesus Christ our Saviour
    Was born on Christmas day.

In Bethlehem in Jewry
  This blessèd Babe was born,
And laid within a manger
  Upon this blessèd morn;

To which his mother Mary
Nothing did take in scorn.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day.

From God our Heavenly Father
A blessèd angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
Brought tidings of the same,
How that in Bethlehem was born
The Son of God by name.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day.

Fear not, then said the Angel,
Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour
Of virtue, power, and might;
So frequently to vanquish all
The friends of Satan quite.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day.

The Shepherds at those tidings
Rejoiced much in mind,

And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway,
This blessed Babe to find.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Whereat this infant lay,
They found him in a manger
Where oxen feed on hay;
His mother Mary kneeling
Unto the Lord did pray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace;
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ our Saviour
Was born on Christmas day.

Anonymous.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

From "His Noble Numbers"

Chorus:

WHAT sweeter music can we bring,
Than a Carroll for to sing
The Birth of this our heavenly King?
Awake the voice! awake the String!
Heart, Ears, and Eye, and every thing
Awake! the while the active Finger
Runs division with the Singer.

From the Flourish they came to the song:

1. Dark and dull night, flie hence away,
And give the honor to this Day,
That sees *December* turn'd to *May*.

2. If we may ask the reason, say;
The why and wherefore all things here
Seem like the Springtime of the yeere?

3. Why do's the chilling Winters morne
Smile, like a field beset with corne?
Or smell, like to a meade new-shorne,
Thus, on the sudden? 4. Come and see

The cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'T is He is borne, whose quick'ning Birth
Gives Life and lustre, publike mirth,
To Heaven, and the under-Earth.

Chorus:

We see Him come, and know Him ours,
Who, with His sunshine, and His showers,
Turnes all the patient ground to flowers.

1. The Darling of the World is come,
And fit it is, we find a roome
To welcome Him. 2. The nobler part
Of all the house here, is the heart.

Chorus:

Which we will give Him; and bequeath
This Hollie, and this Ivie Wreath,
To do him honor; Who 's our King,
And Lord of all this Revelling.

Robert Herrick.

THIS ENDRIS NIGHT

Percy Society's Text

THIS endris night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright as day;
And ever among
A maiden sung,
Lullay, byby, lullay.
This lovely lady sat and sang, and to her childë said:
"My son, my brother, my father dear, why liest thou thus in hayd?
My sweetë brid,
Thus it is betid
Though thou be King veray;
But, nevertheless,
I will not cease
To sing byby, lullay."

The child then spake; in his talking he to his mother said:
"I bekid am king, in crib though I be laid;
For angels bright
Down to me light,

Thou knowest it is no nay.
And of that sight
Thou mayest be light
To sing byby, lullay."

"Now, sweet son, since thou art king, why art thou laid in stall?
Why not thou ordain thy bedding in some great King's hall?
Methinketh it is right
That king or knight
Should be in good array;
And then among
It were no wrong
To sing byby, lullay."

"Mary, mother, I am thy child, though I be laid in stall;
Lords and dukes shall worship me, and so shall kingës all.
Ye shall well see
That kingës three
Shall come on the twelfth day;
For this behest
Give me thy breast,
And sing byby, lullay."

"Now tell me, sweet son, I thee pray, thou art
my love and dear,
How should I keep thee to thy pay, and make
thee glad of cheer?
For all thy will
I would fulfil,
Thou weet'st full well in fay.
And for all this
I will thee kiss,
And sing byby, lullay."

"My dear mother, when time it be, take thou me
up aloft,
And set me upon thy knee, and handle me full
soft.
And in thy arm
Thou wilt me warm,
And keep night and day;
If I weep,
And may not sleep,
Thou sing byby, lullay."

"Now, sweet son, since it is so, all things are at
thy will,
I pray thee grant to me a boon, if it be right and
skill,
That child or man,
That will and can,

Be merry upon my day;
To bliss them bring,
And I shall sing
Lullay, byby, lullay."

Old Carol.

I SAW THREE SHIPS

I SAW three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas day in the morning.

And what was in those ships all three
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And what was in those ships all three
On Christmas day in the morning?

Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Our Saviour Christ and his lady,
On Christmas day in the morning.

Pray whither sailed those ships all three
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Pray whither sailed those ships all three
On Christmas day in the morning?

O they sailed into Bethlehem
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
O they sailed into Bethlehem
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the bells on earth shall ring
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the angels in heaven shall sing
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the angels in heaven shall sing
On Christmas day in the morning.

And all the souls on earth shall sing
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
And all the souls on earth shall sing
On Christmas day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain
On Christmas day, on Christmas day;
Then let us all rejoice amain
On Christmas day in the morning.

Anonymous.

THE GOLDEN CAROL

Of Melchior, Balthazar, and Gaspar, the Three Kings of Cologne

WE saw the light shine out afar,
On Christmas in the morning,
And straight we knew Christ's Star it was,
Bright beaming in the morning.

Then did we fall on bended knee,
On Christmas in the morning,
And prais'd the Lord, who 'd let us see
His glory at its dawning.

Oh! ever thought be of His Name,
On Christmas in the morning,
Who bore for us both grief and shame,
Affection's sharpest scorning.

And may we die (when death shall come),
On Christmas in the morning,
And see in heav'n, our glorious home,
The Star of Christmas morning.

Old English.

THE CHERRY-TREE CAROL

AS Joseph was a-walking,
He heard an angel sing,
"This night shall be the birth-time
Of Christ, our heavenly King."

He neither shall be born
In housen nor in hall,
Nor in the place of paradise,
But in an ox's stall.

He neither shall be clothèd
In purple nor in pall,
But in the fair white linen
That usen babies all.

He neither shall be rockèd
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden manger
That resteth on the mould."

As Joseph was a-walking,
There did an angel sing,
And Mary's child at midnight
Was born to be our King.

Then be ye glad, good people,
This night of all the year,
And light ye up your candles,
For His star it shineth clear.

Old English.

A VIRGIN MOST PURE

A VIRGIN most pure, as the prophets do tell,
Hath brought forth a babe, as it hath her befell,
To be our Redeemer from death, hell, and sin,
Which Adam's transgression hath wrapt us all in.
Rejoice and be merry, set sorrow aside,
Christ Jesus, our Saviour, was born at this tide.

In Bethlehem city, in Jewry it was,
Where Joseph and Mary together did pass,
And there to be taxed, with many one mo',
For Cæsar commanded the same should be so.
Rejoice and be merry, etc.

But, when they had entered the city so fair,
The number of people so mighty was there,
That Joseph and Mary, whose substance was small,
Could get in the city no lodging at all.

They were constrain'd in a stable to lie,
Where oxen and asses they usèd to tie;
Their lodging so simple, they held it no scorn,
But against the next morning our Saviour was born.

The King of all Glory to the world being brought,
Small store of fine linen to wrap him was wrought;
When Mary had swaddled her young son so sweet.
Within an ox manger she laid him to sleep.

Then God sent an angel from Heaven so high,
To certain poor Shepherds in fields where they lie,
And bid them no longer in sorrow to stay,
Because that our Saviour was born on this day.

Then presently after, the Shepherds did spy
A number of Angels appear in the sky,
Who joyfully talked, and sweetly did sing,
"To God be all Glory, our Heavenly King."

Three certain wise Princes, they thought it most meek
To lay their rich off'rings at our Saviour's feet;
Then the Shepherds consent, and to Bethlehem did go,
And when they came thither they found it was so.

Rejoice and be merry, set sorrow aside,
Christ Jesus, our Saviour, was born at this tide.
Old Carol.

TO-DAY IN BETHLEHEM

TO-DAY in Bethlehem hear I
Sweet angel voices singing,
All glory be to God on high,
Who peace to earth is bringing.
The Virgin Mary holdeth more
Than highest heaven most holy:
Light shines on what was dark before,
And lifteth up the lowly.

God wills that peace should be in earth,
And holy exultation:
Sweet Babe, I greet Thy spotless birth
And wondrous Incarnation.
To-day in Bethlehem hear I
Even the lowly singing:
With angel-words they pierce the sky;
All earth with joy is ringing.

From the Greek of John of Damascus by Philip Schaff, D. D.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL FOR CHILDREN

GOOD news from heaven the angels bring,
Glad tidings to the earth they sing:
To us this day a child is given,
To crown us with the joy of heaven.

This is the Christ, our God and Lord,
Who in all need shall aid afford;
He will Himself our Saviour be,
From sin and sorrow set us free.

To us that blessedness He brings,
Which from the Father's bounty springs:
That in the heavenly realm we may
With Him enjoy eternal day.

All hail, Thou noble Guest, this morn,
Whose love did not the sinner scorn!
In my distress Thou cam'st to me:
What thanks shall I return to Thee?

Were earth a thousand times as fair,
Beset with gold and jewels rare,
She yet were far too poor to be
A narrow cradle, Lord, for Thee.

Ah, dearest Jesus, Holy Child!
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, that it may be
A quiet chamber kept for Thee.

Praise God upon His heavenly throne,
Who gave to us His only Son:
For this His hosts, on joyful wing,
A blest New Year of mercy sing.

Martin Luther.

MASTERS, IN THIS HALL

From Edmund Sedding's "Antient Christmas Carols"

TO Bethlem did they go, the shepherds three:
To Bethlem did they go to see whe'r it were so or no,
Whether Christ were born or no
To set men free.

Masters, in this hall,
Hear ye news to-day
Brought over sea,
And ever I you pray.

Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!
Sing we clear!
Holpen are all folk on earth,
Born is God's Son so dear.

Going over the hills,
  Through the milk-white snow,
Heard I ewes bleat
  While the wind did blow.
Nowell, etc.

Shepherds, many an one,
  Sat among the sheep;
No man spake more word
  Than they had been asleep.

Quoth I, "Fellows mine,
  Why this guise sit ye?
Making but dull cheer,
  Shepherds though ye be?

"Shepherds should, of right,
  Leap and dance and sing;
Thus to see ye sit
  Is a right strange thing."

Quoth these fellows then:
  "To Bethlem town we go,
To see a Mighty Lord
  Lie in manger low.

"How name ye this Lord,
  Shepherds?" then said I.
"Very God," they said,
  "Come from Heaven high."

Then to Bethlem town
  We went, two and two,
And in a sorry place
  Heard the oxen low.

Therein did we see
  A sweet and goodly May,
And a fair old man;
  Upon the straw she lay.

And a little CHILD
  On her arm had she;
"Wot ye who this is?"
  Said the hinds to me.

Ox and ass Him know,
  Kneeling on their knee;
Wondrous joy had I
  This little BABE to see.

This is CHRIST the Lord,
  Masters, be ye glad!
Christmas is come in,
  And no folk should be sad.

Nowell! Nowell! Nowell! Nowell!
  Sing we clear!
Holpen are all folk on earth,
  Born is God's Son so dear.

William Morris.

FROM FAR AWAY

OUTLANDERS, whence come ye last?
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
Through what green seas and great have ye passed?
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

From far away, O masters mine,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
We come to bear you goodly wine,
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor

From far away we come to you,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
To tell of great tidings strange and true.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News, news of the Trinity,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
And Mary and Joseph from over the sea!
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

For as we wandered far and wide,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
What hap do ye deem there should us betide!
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

Under a tent, when the night was deep,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
There lay three shepherds, tending their sheep.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"O ye shepherds, what have ye seen,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
To slay your sorrow and heal your teen?"
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"In an ox-stall this night we saw
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
A babe and a maid without a flaw.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"There was an old man there beside,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
His hair was white and his hood was wide.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"And as we gazed this thing upon,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
Those twain knelt down to the Little One.
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

"And a marvelous song we straight did hear,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
That slew our sorrow and healed our care."
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.

News of a fair and marvellous thing,
The snow in the street and the wind on the door.
Nowell, nowell, nowell, sing we!
Minstrels and maids, stand forth on the floor.
William Morris.

O'ER THE WORLD, IN SILENCE SLEEPING

O'ER the world, in silence sleeping,
Countless stars shone clear and bright;
Lonely, silent vigil keeping,
Shepherds watched their flocks by night.

Hour by hour the night was numbered,
'Neath the distant Eastern skies;
Hour by hour their charges slumbered,
Guarded by their watchful eyes.

Suddenly the skies were rifted —
Heaven's curtain rent in twain —
On their startled gaze, uplifted,
Burst the wondrous angel-train.

Sweeping downward through the arches
Of the rent and cloven sky,
Grander than the grandest marches
Of earth's hosts, to victory;

Nobler than the greatest glory
  Annalled on the page of time,
Sung in verse, or told in story,
  Came the angel host, sublime!

All the vault of heaven, ringing,
  To the music of the sky;
Golden lyres, and angels singing:
  "Glory be to God on high!"

Voices that before creation
  Rang the anthems of His praise.
Now, in endless adoration,
  Sang anew His wondrous grace:

Carolled forth the gracious story
  Of God's love and pardon, then
Sang: "To God on high be glory,
  Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Golden lyres, by angel fingers
  Swept, rang forth the strain again;
Soft, angelic-sweet, it lingers —
  "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

George Channing Thomas.

O LOVELY VOICES OF THE SKY

O LOVELY voices of the sky,
That hymned the Saviour's birth!
Are ye not singing still on high,
Ye that sang "Peace on Earth!"
To us yet speak the strains
Wherewith, in days gone by,
Ye blessed the Syrian swains
O voices of the sky!

O clear and shining light! whose beams
That hour heaven's glory shed
Around the palms, and o'er the streams,
And on the shepherd's head;
Be near, through life and death,
As in that holiest night,
Of Hope, and Joy, and Faith,
O clear and shining light!

O star! which led to Him whose love
Brought down man's ransom free;
Where art thou? — 'midst the hosts above
May we still gaze on thee?
In heaven thou art not set,
Thy ways earth might not dim,
Send them to guide us yet,
O star which led to Him!

Felicia Hemans.

THE MOON THAT NOW IS SHINING

THE moon that now is shining
In skies so blue and bright,
Shone ages since on Shepherds
Who watched their flocks by night.
There was no sound upon the earth,
The azure air was still,
The sheep in quiet clusters lay
Upon a grassy hill.

When lo! a white-winged Angel
The watchers stood before,
And told how Christ was born on earth
For mortals to adore;
He bade the trembling Shepherds
Listen, nor be afraid,
And told how in a manger
The glorious Child was laid.

When suddenly in the Heavens
Appeared an Angel band —
(The while in reverent wonder
The Syrian Shepherds stand),
And all the bright host chanted
Words that shall never cease —
Glory to God in the highest,
On earth good-will and peace.

The vision in the heavens
  Faded, and all was still,
And the wondering shepherds left their flocks
  To feed upon the hill:
Toward the blessed city
  Quickly their course they held,
And in a lowly stable
  Virgin and Child beheld.

Beside a humble manger
  Was the Maiden Mother mild,
And in her arms her Son divine,
  A newborn Infant, smiled.
No shade of future sorrow
  From Calvary then was cast,
Only the glory was revealed,
  The suffering was not past.

The Eastern kings before Him knelt,
  And rarest offerings brought;
The shepherds worshipped and adored
  The wonders God had wrought:
They saw the crown for Israel's King,
  The future's glorious part —
But all these things the Mother kept
  And pondered in her heart.

Now we that Maiden Mother
The Queen of Heaven call,
And the Child we call our Jesus,
Saviour and Judge of all —
But the star that shone on Bethlehem
Shines still, and shall not cease,
And we listen still to the tidings
Of Glory and of Peace.

Adelaide A. Procter.

WHEN THE HERDS WERE WATCHING

WHEN the herds were watching
In the midnight chill,
Came a spotless lambkin
From the heavenly hill.

Snow was on the mountains,
And the wind was cold,
When from God's own garden
Dropped a rose of gold.

When 't was bitter winter,
Houseless and forlorn
In a star-lit stable
Christ the Babe was born.

Welcome, heavenly lambkin;
  Welcome, golden rose;
Alleluia, Baby,
  In the swaddling clothes!

William Canton.

SLEEP, HOLY BABE

SLEEP, holy Babe,
  Upon Thy mother's breast;
Great Lord of earth, and sea, and sky,
How sweet it is to see Thee lie
  In such a place of rest.

Edward Caswall.

I HEAR ALONG OUR STREET

From "The Noei Bourguignon de Gui Barôzai"

I HEAR along our street
  Pass the minstrel throngs;
Hark! they play so sweet
On their hautboys, Christmas songs!
    Let us by the fire
    Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire.

In December ring
Every day the chimes;
Loud the gleemen sing
In the streets their merry rhymes.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire.

Shepherds at the grange,
Where the Babe was born,
Sang, with many a change,
Christmas carols until morn.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire.

These good people sang
Songs devout and sweet;
While the rafters rang,
There they stood with freezing feet.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire.

Nuns in frigid cells,
At this holy tide,
For want of something else,
Christmas songs at times have tried.

Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire.

Washerwomen old,
To the sound they beat,
Sing by rivers cold,
With uncovered heads and feet.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire.

Who by the fireside stands,
Stamps his feet and sings;
But he who blows his hands
Not so gay a carol brings.
Let us by the fire
Ever higher
Sing them till the night expire!

Henry W. Longfellow.

IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER

IN the bleak midwinter
Frosty winds made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
Water like a stone;

Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
  Snow on snow,
In the bleak midwinter
  Long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him,
  Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
  When He comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter
  A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty
  Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim
  Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
  And a mangerful of hay;
Enough for Him, whom angels
  Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
  Which adore.

Angels and archangels
  May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
  Thronged the air;

But only His mother,
In her maiden bliss,
Worshipped the Belovèd
With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him —
Give my heart.

Christina G. Rossetti.

A HOPE CAROL

A NIGHT was near, a day was near;
Between a day and night
I heard sweet voices calling clear,
Calling me;
I heard a whirr of wing on wing,
But could not see the sight;
I long to see the birds that sing,
I long to see.

Below the stars, beyond the moon,
Between the night and day,
I heard a rising, falling tune
Calling me;
I long to see the pipes and strings
Whereon such minstrels play;
I long to see each face that sings,
I long to see.

To-day, or maybe not to-day,
To-night or not to-night,
All voices that command or pray,
Calling me.
Shall kindle in my soul such fire,
And in my eyes such light,
That I shall see that heart's desire
I long to see.

Christina G. Rossetti.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS EVERYWHERE

IT chanced upon the merry, merry Christmas Eve
I went sighing past the church, across the moorland dreary,—
"Oh! never sin and want and woe this earth will leave,

And the bells but mock the wailing round they sing so cheery.
How long, O Lord! how long before Thou come again?
Still in cellar, and in garret, and on moorland dreary,
The orphans moan, and widows weep, and poor men toil in vain,
Till earth is sick of hope deferred, though Christmas bells be cheery."

Then arose a joyous clamor, from the wildfowl on the mere,
Beneath the stars, across the snow, like clear bells ringing,
And a voice within cried, "Listen! Christmas carols even here!
Though thou be dumb, yet o'er their work the stars and snows are singing.
Blind! I live, I love, I reign; and all the nations through
With the thunder of My judgments even now are ringing.
Do thou fulfil thy work but as yon wildfowl do,
Thou wilt hear no less the wailing, yet hear through it angels singing."

Charles Kingsley.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL

To Rev. Dr. Wordsworth, with Sonnets to the River Duddon and Other Poems

THE minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage eaves;
While, smitten by a lofty moon,
The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen,
That overpowered their natural green.

Through hill and valley every breeze
Had sunk to rest with folded wings:
Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
Nor check, the music of the strings;
So stout and hardy were the band
That scraped the chords with strenuous hand;

And who but listened? — till was paid
Respect to every inmate's claim:
The greeting given, the music played,
In honor of each household name,
Duly pronounced with lusty call,
And "Merry Christmas" wished to all!

O Brother! I revere the choice
That took thee from thy native hills:

And it is given thee to rejoice,
Though public care full often tills
(Heaven only witness of the toil)
A barren and ungrateful soil.

Yet, would that thou, with me and mine,
Hadst heard the never-failing rite,
And seen on other faces shine
A true revival of the light
Which Nature and these rustic Powers,
In simple childhood, spread through ours.

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
On these expected annual rounds,
Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
Or they are offered at the door
That guards the lowliest of the poor.

How touching, when at midnight sweep
Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark,
To hear — and sink again to sleep!
Or, at an earlier call, to mark
By blazing fire the still suspense
Of self-complacent innocence;

The mutual nod — the grave disguise
Of hearts with gladness brimming o'er —

And some unbidden tears that rise
For names once heard, and heard no more;
Tears brightened by the serenade
For infant in the cradle laid.

Ah! not for emerald fields alone,
With ambient streams more pure and bright
Than fabled Cytherea's zone,
Glittering before the Thunderer's sight,
Is to my heart of hearts endeared
The ground where we were born and reared!

Hail, ancient Manners! sure defence,
Where they survive, of wholesome laws;
Remnants of love whose modest sense
Thus into narrow room withdraws;
Hail, Usages of pristine mould,
And ye that guard them, Mountains old!

Bear with me, Brother! quench the thought
That slights this passion, or condemns;
If thee fond Fancy ever brought
From the proud margin of the Thames,
And Lambeth's venerable towers,
To humbler streams and greener bowers.

Yes, they can make, who fail to find
Short leisure even in busiest days,

Moments to cast a look behind,
And profit by those kindly rays
That through the clouds do sometimes steal,
And all the far-off past reveal.

Hence, while the imperial City's din
Beats frequent on thy satiate ear,
A pleased attention I may win
To agitations less severe,
That neither overwhelm nor cloy,
But fill the hollow vale with joy!

William Wordsworth.

EVERYWHERE, CHRISTMAS TO-NIGHT

EVERYWHERE, everywhere, Christmas to-night!
Christmas in lands of the fir-tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm-tree and vine,
Christmas where snow-peaks stand solemn and white,
Christmas where cornfields lie sunny and bright.
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Christmas where children are hopeful and gay,
Christmas where old men are patient and gray,

Christmas where peace, like a dove in its flight,
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight.
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

For the Christ-child who comes is the Master of all,
No palace too great and no cottage too small;
The angels who welcome Him sing from the height,
"In the City of David, a King in His might."
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Then let every heart keep its Christmas within,
Christ's pity for sorrow, Christ's hatred for sin,
Christ's care for the weakest, Christ's courage for right,
Christ's dread of the darkness, Christ's love of the light,
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

So the stars of the midnight which compass us round
Shall see a strange glory, and hear a sweet sound,
And cry, "Look! the earth is aflame with delight,
O sons of the morning, rejoice at the sight."
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas to-night!

Phillips Brooks.

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LO! NEW-BORN JESUS

LO! new-born Jesus,
  Soft and weak and small,
Wrapped in baby's bands
By His mother's hands,
  Lord God of all.

Lord God of Mary,
  Whom His lips caress
While He rocks to rest
On her milky breast
  In helplessness.

Lord God of shepherds
  Flocking through the cold,
Flocking through the dark
To the only Ark,
  The only Fold.

Lord God of all things,
  Be they near or far,
Be they high or low;
Lord of storm and snow,
  Angel and star.

Lord God of all men —
  My Lord and my God!
Thou who lovest me,
Keep me close to Thee
  By staff and rod.

Lo! new-born Jesus,
  Loving great and small,
Love's free Sacrifice,
Opening Arms and Eyes
  To one and all.

Christina G. Rossetti.

WHAT MEANS THIS GLORY?

WHAT means this glory round our feet,"
  The Magi mused, "more bright than morn?"
And voices chanted, clear and sweet,
  "To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"

"What means that star," the Shepherds said,
  "That brightens through the rocky glen?"
And angels, answering overhead,
  Sang, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

'T is eighteen hundred years and more
  Since those sweet oracles were dumb;
We wait for Him, like them of yore,
  Alas! he seems so slow to come!

But it was said, in words of gold,
  No time or sorrow e'er shall dim,
That little children might be bold —
  In perfect trust to come to Him.

All round about our feet shall shine
  A light like that the Wise Men saw,
If we our loving wills incline
  To that sweet Life which is the Law.

So shall we learn to understand
  The simple faith of shepherds then,
And, clasping kindly hand in hand,
  Sing, "Peace on earth, good-will to men!"

But they who do their souls no wrong,
  But keep at eve the faith of morn,
Shall daily hear the angel song,
  "To-day the Prince of Peace is born!"

James Russell Lowell.

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